

PHILOSOPHICAL CRITICISM IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, culminating in the impressive achievements of Newton, profoundly disturbed the traditional authority of the classics, the church and the state, and seemed to offer a new kind of certainty in its appeal to experimental fact. Natural philosophy provided the eighteenth century with a new definition of truth, which came to mean the accurate correspondence of statements with events as they were observed to take place in nature. The consequences of this new theory of truth were felt even in the theory of art.

Thus, whereas Dryden's criticism shows signs of the pre-scientific notion that truth, the authority for making critical judgments, transcends natural phenomena, though it may be recognised among them, Addison clearly regards the facts about the pleasures of the imagination as the experimental evidence to which the critic must appeal to justify his opinions. In effect, Addison calls for research into the relationship between objects of beauty, sublimity and novelty and the individual's responses to them.

Burke, Kames and Gerard all try to provide such experimental evidence of what causes emotions. Their use of the experimental method makes them, like Addison, scientific, or, to use the eighteenth-century term, "philosophical", critics. Their emulation of the scientific method, however, had a definite and ultimately unscientific purpose. They aimed to restore the foundations of authority in criticism and, by discovering the scientific truth about human nature, they hoped to set up rules for justifying critical judgments. They adopted the scientific method in an attempt to restore the certainty to critical standards which science itself had helped to undermine.

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CONTENTS

						PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	DRYDEN	18
III.	ADDISON	29
IV.	BURKE	42
V.	KAMES	73
VI.	GERARD	...	...	...	...	98
VII.	CONCLUSION	...	...	...	...	143
APPENDIX I.		...	...	...	...	161
APPENDIX II.		...	...	...	...	162
APPENDIX III.		...	...	...	...	163
BIBLIOGRAPHY		...	...	...	...	165

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

Twentieth-century criticism is dominated by pedagogy. Its prime function is the analysis and explanation of individual works of art. It enlarges its scope, to cover the works of one man, one school, one period or one country, chiefly to compare the individual works in the specified group. The aim is to elucidate, to increase understanding and therefore to educate.

When the twentieth-century scholar comes to praise the eighteenth-century critic, he tends to look for evidence of his own concern with exegesis. Of course he finds it. In the great volume of eighteenth-century criticism there is plenty of particular examination of individual works. But there is also much else.

One of the most important of the other forms of criticism prevalent in the eighteenth century, and very much characteristic of the period, is a concern with theory and first principles. At that time critics devoted much labour to discussing the nature, conditions and improvement of the ability to respond to works of art, and, indeed, to the appeal of natural phenomena, too.

Such discussion, needless to say, continues in the twentieth century, but without the urgency and self-sufficiency of before, and as a specialist concern. It is no longer seen as a desirable accompaniment to literary and artistic interests, nor as a useful study for every educated man. The historian of the eighteenth century acknowledges the importance in his period of study of subjects like taste, the pleasures of the imagination and the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, but perhaps accepts them too easily as parts of the mental landscape of that time. He underestimates the excitement these subjects inspired. It is surely astonishing, from a twentieth-century point of view /

view, that so many intelligent men and women should spend so much energy writing substantial treatises on the pleasures of taste. It is even more remarkable that they should have a public for such speculations. People were ready to leave off the enjoyable business of exercising their taste in order to read about how and why they enjoyed it.

One response to this is to try to find something in the twentieth century which is equivalent to the literature of taste of two hundred years before. The result is likely to be the introduction into the discussion of a very dangerous word - "aesthetics". According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this word entered the English language only in the nineteenth century, and then against some opposition and with a confused meaning (because of its adoption as a technical term by Kant). When applied to works like Addison's essays on the pleasures of the imagination, or Burke's Enquiry, or Kames's Elements, or Gerard's Essay on Taste, "aesthetics" suggests that they are philosophy, not literature, a distinction not clearly made in the eighteenth century. The implication is that they required the attentions of a philosopher, a student of aesthetics, rather than that of a literary critic, or of an ordinary reader.

Yet the specialised aesthetical philosopher of the twentieth century finds Burke, Kames and the others, if he bothers to consider them, disappointing; he would rather leave them to the literary critics. He may condescend to see them as forerunners of philosophical aesthetics, but seeing them as something is not seeing them as what they were in the eighteenth century, before philosophical aesthetics had developed.

The problem of understanding works like those of Burke, Kames and Gerard is, however, more than just a matter of definition. If there is no straightforward way of characterising their work, a very typical feature /

feature of eighteenth-century culture suddenly appears mysterious and ill-explained. Elements of Criticism, for instance, is a long book, and Kames in several places admits that what he has to say is neither amusing nor easy to understand. Yet the work was a success, running into many editions on both sides of the Atlantic and on the Continent. And clearly Kames meant it to have some popular esteem, for otherwise he would not have apologised for being dull and urged the reader to press on; such remarks are unusual in a formal philosophical treatise, or in twentieth-century literary criticism.

In any other case one would suspect that Burke, Kames and the rest were popularisers of more advanced and technical material. But there do not seem to be more technical works on the subject of taste and criticism in their time; Kames and Burke cannot be forerunners of philosophical aesthetics and popularisers of it as well. But, in a different sense, these authors were in fact popularisers, writing to shed new light and spread new ideas, and there is quite clear evidence of the way in which they were regarded as such.

The word contemporaries applied to Kames and Gerard, and which Burke himself applied to his Enquiry, was "philosophical". The term "philosophy" underwent significant change in the eighteenth century, as the human endeavour it denoted changed its nature, too. A distinction arose between "philosophy" and "natural philosophy", and in the early nineteenth century the latter came to be called "science". It was, however, common enough in the preceding century to use the adjective "philosophical" to mean, roughly, "scientific", as the word is understood since the nineteenth century. Thus, "philosophical criticism" might be translated into modern parlance as "scientific criticism". In short, the major influence on the kind of criticism Kames, Gerard and Burke represent is natural philosophy, or science, and their readers recognised this. Indeed, they themselves say so.

In /

In other words, the culmination of the scientific revolution in the triumph of Newton, as one would expect, enticed eighteenth-century thinkers into expectations of similar successes in other fields, and encouraged them to extend what they thought of as Newtonian methods - "philosophical" methods - beyond the limits of Newton's physics. And because of the wider meaning of "philosophy", they did not stop their enquiries where the twentieth century sees science becomes philosophy, or even note a boundary. One of these encroachments of fundamentally scientific speculation was into the domain of art and criticism. The result was neither aesthetics nor criticism, but "philosophical criticism".

Before examining in detail the evidence for this interpretation of "philosophical criticism" and using the insight that the style of thought of the philosophical critic is scientific to illuminate their arguments and conclusions, it is as well to attempt a description of the more general influence of natural philosophy on eighteenth-century culture, with special reference to literary and artistic criticism. The classic starting-point is the Copernican revolution in the theory of the universe.

The metaphysical problem raised by the Copernican revolution was relativity. Even the most unmathematical thinker could grasp that the heliocentric theory altered the way of looking at the universe without altering its appearance. The old, geocentric theory possessed the virtue of seeming to be based on common, everyday experience. The meaning of the statement "The sun moves across the sky" seemed unequivocal. But Copernicus made it equivocal. His theory pointed out that if one body moves relative to another, an observer on either cannot immediately tell just by looking at the other body whether he is at rest or not, or whether the body he observes is in motion or not, for he will always seem to see the other body move.

After /

After Copernicus, no man of intellect could look up into the sky and not remember that what he might say he saw there differed from a possibly true account. An intellectual choice had to be made. The concept of apparent or relative motion, which was fundamental to the heliocentric theory, undermined confidence in plain perception. One would have in future to be cautious in one's assertions, and one would have to suspect that one might occupy a point of view which entailed misleading impressions.

The Copernican theory, by its telling illustration of the principle of relativity, directed attention to the significance of point of view. It made men suspect that what seemed obvious from one view-point might appear limited, naive and prejudiced from another. But the heliocentric theory also introduced the important notion of equivalent points of view, for it follows from that theory that the view of the solar system had by terrestrial observers does not differ in principle from that of observers on the other planets. The significance of the opinion is threefold. First, it suggests that of a series of different descriptions it is not necessarily the case that some or any should be superior to others. Second, such equivalent views can be reconciled in principle. Third, the reconciliation of the differing views will produce a genuine synthesis, which will be a description of an object such that it could satisfy to a certain extent the various descriptions of appearances reported from separate points of view. The description of the "common object" of the several observations would, however, be essentially impersonal, for it need not coincide with any of the actual descriptions from which it is derived; one cannot, for example, watch all the planets orbit the sun from a position on one of the planets.

The theoretical equivalence, in a heliocentric system, of each planet as a point of view whence to observe the whole system was, of course /

course, a conclusion that coincided historically with speculation about the similarity of the earth with other planets and the possibility of other inhabited worlds. Such notions are imaginative illustrations of the relativity of the terrestrial observer. The exploration of the earth and the enthusiasm for the culture of Greece and Rome brought relativity and the comparison of view-points down to a lower level, and the Reformation insistence on questions of personal salvation further reduced it until it applied to individual human beings.

It is at this level that relativity affects criticism, emerging as the problem of comparing various tastes. The concept of relativity, with its corollary of a reconciliation of differing points of view in a synthetic description of the common object of observation, makes it impossible to reconcile individual judgments of taste by sheer assertion of personal authority. The critic cannot simply claim that what he sees from his point of view is the truth and that others must conform. For one thing, the others may be seeing equally clearly, except that from their point of view appearances differ. What the critic must do is discover how in principle he and the other observers could be experiencing the same thing, even although their accounts differ, and base his judgment on that generalisation. It is the method of arriving at such generalisations that Addison, Burke, Kames and Gerard seek to expound.

Sensitivity to the relativity of view-point and the equivalence of individual observers, however, brings the critics face to face with the problems of atomism. In the seventeenth century there was a renewal of interest in the atomic theory, or, as it was sometimes called, the corpuscular theory, of matter. No doubt this was partly inspired by the new astronomy, which suggested that the stars were, like the sun, bright globules of incandescent matter floating in space.

Atomism /

Atomism, however, raises difficult questions which are ultimately of a logical nature, especially if the atomistic theory is to be applied in a context of change. If material objects, for instance, consist of particles, when they undergo change then their constituent particles must be affected. If the particles are themselves essentially altered in the change, then they can themselves be regarded as possessing alterable parts and hence are not ultimate constituents. A corpuscle whose nature is changeable is not therefore the most basic particle of matter; true atoms are immutable. Hence changes in the state of matter must be due to the re-arrangement of atoms. But if objects are merely arrangements of particles which remain absolutely unchanged in their internal natures, how do these agglomerations so much as cohere?

The answer to this question is complicated because the theory that matter is granular entails the concept of an immaterial void among the particles. The interstices between atoms cannot be occupied by matter, or else they would contain other atoms; they must be quite empty. But if that is the case, how can any influence pass from atom to atom? The coherence of the atoms in material objects must be due to forces transmitted by immaterial means. It is a logical necessity of atomistic theories that the nature of the particles must differ qualitatively from the nature of the connections among them.

This logical discord occurs over and over in the work of the philosophical critics, for they repeatedly adopt atomistic theories. The most important types of these theories are those to do with psychology and language, and those to do with the nature of society. They consistently adopt atomistic theories of the mind, according to which thought is a process of linking up single perceptions or ideas into complex structures. The probable source of the details of the scheme was generally John Locke:

Taking /

Taking physics as its model, Locke's science of human nature treated mind on the analogy of Newtonian matter. It was bound, therefore, to become atomistic. Elementary ideas, identical in origin with elementary sensations, made the term of that analysis which would know only operations. These particulate ideas drop into the mind through the five funnels of sense. There they bound, rebound, and combine like the corpuscles of which they are counterparts. In this kinetic theory of the intellect, the association of ideas is the counterpart of the law of universal attraction.¹

Eighteenth-century ideas of society are similar. On the one hand is the individual, with his particular experiences, thoughts and opinions; and on the other there is the community, which is made up of individuals who somehow have experiences, thoughts and opinions in common, and know this, although they have no means of direct access to the thought-processes of other individuals.

Furthermore, there is a discontinuity between internal, mental experience and the external world which causes that experience. Objects and ideas are qualitatively different. The consequence of this view was to make the eighteenth-century thinker (and others later) feel somehow cut off from reality, confined in a small space trying to guess what it was like outside from such impressions as the senses could convey. Such a sense of isolation made it difficult to justify communal standards. Social cohesion seemed an accident.

These problems were acutely realised by critics and theorists of art, for they dealt with nothing so much as the personal experiences of individuals. Indeed, it is perhaps because the variety of artistic experience seemed so intractable that the effort to reduce it to common principles /

¹ C.C. Gillispie: The Edge of Objectivity, Princeton, 1960, p. 163.

principles assumed such importance, for if taste could be regularised the rest of human nature surely could not long remain unexplained. The unresolved variations in taste, meanwhile, raised two disquieting possibilities: either human beings intrinsically differed from each other, so that no two could be certain to respond in the same way to the same stimulus, or the works of art and so on that they experienced were unstable and ever-changing.

Now, it is evident that the sense of isolation induced by the atomistic psychology of ideas implies a strong desire to break out of the apparent confines of the mind and attain sure knowledge of the external world of objects. Such knowledge would settle the differences of opinion among men. It was at this point in the argument that the example of science proved so potent. To the eighteenth century, living after the triumph of Newton, the great fact about science was its success. Laws of nature had been revealed, a significant part of the truth about the universe had been discovered, and there was every reason to hope that further efforts would bring forth the rest. At any rate, Newton alone had demonstrated a regularity and orderliness in the great movements of the planets and in the flickering of the minute particles of light. Natural philosophy seemed to have answered the question whether the objects and events which made up the external world were stable with a confident affirmative.

As Gillispie points out, therefore, there is a real correspondence between physical atomism and psychological atomism, the first leading the second towards "objectivity":

The new psychology followed the new physics in a final respect.

It was permitted by a conditional assumption rather than a positive discovery. There was no evidence that all ideas derive from experience, any more than that the texture of matter is atomic.

But /

But atomism and - true to the Epicurean prototype - sensationalism allow objectivity. Unless ideas might be related to experience, they would escape exact and scientific study. No science of human nature would then be possible.¹

In other words, the appeal of the atomistic psychology of ideas was that it suggested a real connection between ideas and objects which would permit the assurance that experience was firmly rooted in the nature of things. If there are only ideas in the mind, and if ideas come only from experience of the outside world, and if the outside world is regular and objectified, the origins of particular ideas are as open to investigation as any other phenomena studied by science. It should then be straightforward enough to define the qualities of ideas stimulated by specific objects, and with such knowledge of the atomic ideas go on to discover the mechanics of the mind.

Furthermore, natural philosophy seemed to offer a method for deriving the general rules from the particular information about ideas, their origins and their associations, while avoiding the individual differences among men. Such innate differences there must be, since there was some variety of opinion. Conceivably they might warp the judgment of the investigator, so that he was prevented from arriving at a true account of human nature. The experimental method, however, relying on facts objectively considered, avoided the distortions of personal prejudice. By basing its theories on experimental evidence, science made them proof against the charge that they were unduly influenced by the idiosyncrasies of the scientist. Science asserted that any man, in any place, at any time, could, by observing any phenomena occurring under the same general conditions, confirm the theory which applied. The theories of natural philosophy were seen as generalisations drawn from one set of particulars and applicable to all similar instances. The operation of forming such general theories was known as induction.

Again /

¹Gillispie, p.163f.

Again, the example of Newton was most influential. As I.L. Laudan says, "Newton was seen as the harbinger of an inductive, experimental learning which proceeded by a gradual ascent from the particulars of observation to general laws which were true and virtually incorrigible". Laudan goes so far as to say that "it was Newton's inductivism and experimentalism - in short, his peculiar kind of empiricism - rather than his optics or his mechanics that motivated the leaders (and the charlatans) of eighteenth-century English intellectual history".¹

By means of induction, the philosophical way of reasoning, the principles underlying the operations of nature could be discovered. To derive general principles, of course, means ignoring a certain amount of the particularity of the research data. Certain facts have to be discounted (for instance, Newton's celestial mechanics took no account of the colour of the planets), while others have to be approximated (Newton calculated gravitational attractions after mathematically reducing the attracting bodies to point masses, assuming the bodies to be regular solids). Thus, in any particular instance, slight discrepancies and some deviations were possible, but negligible; even although the inertial motion of a body according to Newton's first law was impossible to observe, because of the widespread influence of gravity, the principle of the theory was still regarded as true.

The philosophical critics, therefore, were prepared to be somewhat approximate in their theories. They saw it as worthwhile to try and resolve the variety of taste in a general way, without promising to demonstrate an absolute uniformity. Clearly some differences were real, or else there would be no point in the effort to reach general principles; if the variations in taste were totally unimportant, there would be no problem /

¹ I.L. Laudan: "Thomas Reid and the Newtonian Turn of British Methodological Thought" in Robert E. Butts and John W. Davies (eds.): The Methodological Heritage of Newton, Oxford, 1970, p. 104.

problem in asserting that tastes were comparable. The inductivist approach, however, regarded differences not as insignificant but as superficial. A deeper understanding would reveal unifying elements. The laws of taste, that is to say, existed, but they required to be brought out by analysis, and the way to do that was to follow the method of natural philosophy, which had been so successful in discovering other laws of nature.

Behind the spirit of generalisation typical of inductivist reasoning lies a conviction of the impossibility of accounting for all the particulars separately. If the mass of evidence is considered too large for minute investigation, a generalising method is an obvious course. The impulse to use generalising methods is a consequence of the concept of an infinite universe, which was well-established by the eighteenth century. In the face of a possible infinity of source-material, no investigator of nature can be content with a painstaking particular description, taking each thing at a time. Such a method is useless for comprehending an endless universe.

The explanation of the phenomena of taste would consist of two types of theories. Some of the principles of taste would be generalisations about the nature of the objects of taste - works of art and literature, natural scenery, beautiful persons or animals and so on. Like all objects in the external world, they would be stable and fixed in their natures. From considering these natures, the qualities which gave them their appeal to human beings could be discerned. Generalisation of the external qualities of objects would therefore form part of the laws of taste and the principles of criticism. Addison and Burke represent this approach to the subject.

The other approach, more characteristic of Kames and Gerard, considers more especially the reactions of human beings, what it feels like to respond to the objects of taste. Here the critic would seek to establish psychological /

psychological theories, generalisations about the internal sensations characteristic of certain kinds of experience. In doing this the philosophical critic would be investigating principles of human nature. The conclusions he reached would be laws of human nature.

The search for the laws of human nature was the response to the problem of relativity of viewpoint as it affected criticism. The generalised principles of taste would overcome the fragmentation of society that the psychology of ideas implied. A knowledge of the qualities of objects which affected taste and of the mechanisms of the mind stimulated by experiencing such qualities would permit the synthesis of a common description of the object experienced such that it satisfied the particular observations of individuals. A knowledge so objective would enable the critic safely to judge, without fear of personal prejudice.

The need for such a basis of judgment was, of course, a consequence of the scientific attack on authority, which had not left criticism unaffected. Just as religion, politics, metaphysics and astronomy had had their authority of tradition and authority of privilege, criticism had had standards based on ancient precepts and high-minded dogma. All had been similarly weakened by the scientific revolution. The questioning of ancient theories, such as Ptolemaic astronomy, made it possible to cast doubt on doctrines handed down from antiquity, and the tendency of scientists to appeal to their own observations and calculations, that is, to experimental evidence, contrasted with the personal authority of prince and pope, the fiat of the mighty. Or, as R.L. Brett puts it, "the breakdown of authority in literature set up criticism as an autonomous study which had to find the presuppositions on which to base its enquiries".¹

The attack on authority and the analogy of science and criticism are summarised by R.F. Jones:

¹ R.L. Brett: "The Third Earl of Shaftesbury as a Literary Critic" in Modern Language Review, XXXVII (1942), p. 143.

Since the end of the Middle Ages the attack on authority had proceeded with little interruption. Authority in religion had been rejected in the Reformation; authority in government had been contested in the Commonwealth; authority in learning or science had been overthrown in the Restoration, and now authority was being expelled from its last stronghold - literature. Since the situation in criticism was exactly analogous to the earlier situation in science, it is not strange that the revolt of the latter should have inspired a similar revolt in the literary world. In this rebellion science assisted in two ways. First, it set an example of, and furnished a precedent for, the abandonment of submission to the dictates of antiquity. The mere fact that in one field of intellectual activity an increasing number of illustrious men had turned their backs upon the ancients could not but make its influence felt in other fields. Second, it had demonstrated the fallibility of those who had been considered infallible authorities. Again and again it had revealed the erroneous nature of traditional theories and ideas in every branch of science, and had thrown light on places which the ignorance of past ages left dark. Science had refuted in no uncertain manner that basic argument of conservatism, the consent of many men and many ages, by proving that many beliefs which had received such consent were totally false. Certainly the literary critic, looking at the shattered ruins of an erstwhile potent authority, could hardly fail to harbor misgivings regarding its validity in poetry.¹

Jones, however, fails to mention the radical effect on authority of the scientific concepts of relativism, the equivalence of observers and the impersonal synthesis of observations; nor does he stress how at least some literary critics in the eighteenth century saw a new authority in science itself - an authority to replace that which had been lost.

The /

¹ R.F. Jones: The Seventeenth Century, Stanford, 1951, p. 72.

The success of seventeenth-century natural philosophy misled the next century into believing that science had replaced the traditional forms of authority. It was clear enough that science had overturned the authority of tradition and of supernatural inspiration. What was not so obvious was that it had not simply substituted for these the authority of an appeal to nature, to the facts of the world of objective phenomena. The new kind of authority represented by science was in fact more complex than previous forms. It included not only fidelity to empirical observation but also a methodology in which the part played by theory was of primary importance. Theory and fact, not fact alone, was and is, the essence of scientific authority.

It was accidental and in a way unfortunate that Newton's genius had been able to push the new method to a success so complete so soon. It was not perhaps an accident, and certainly unfortunate, that he should display some hostility to metaphysics and, in at least one celebrated instance, to theory, the framing of hypotheses. "Magnificent, irrefutable achievements" writes Burt, "gave Newton authority over the modern world, which, feeling itself to have become free from metaphysics through Newton the positivist, has become shackled and controlled by a very definite metaphysics through Newton the metaphysician ..."¹ The achievement of science seemed to be its accurate description of the world, its positive truthfulness, and from that, apparently, came its authority.

The old sources of authority - the ancient world and religious dogma - were impossible. The critics of the eighteenth century therefore turned to the new - science or natural philosophy. The philosophical critics saw the philosophical way of reasoning almost entirely as a means of coming at the truth about their subject, meaning by that a rather naive concept of a straightforward /

¹ E.A. Burt: The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science, London, 1932, p. 227f.

straightforward description of the facts. But criticism, like ethics and politics, has a social function which involves the formation and the conflict of value judgments. It is active, where pure science is contemplative. A critic cannot simply define his subject, describe it, reduce it to principles and sit back; he has to use his knowledge and apply his skills and theories in debate with other critics. Hence he establishes the authority of his principles in order to equip himself for their use in evaluating works of art and so on.

The authority of the principles of human nature which the philosophical critics hoped to derive, therefore, although analogous in point of their derivation to that of scientific laws, had a function which was beyond the scope of scientific authority. The philosophical critics wanted to establish the truth about human nature, the essential regularity in the variety of opinion, not just for the sake of it, but for the purpose of using it as a standard of judgment. In general, it would fill the gap left by the dismissal of the authority of tradition and dogma. Indeed, the critics sometimes reveal the equivalence, for them, of empirical fact with these old-fashioned forms of authority by naively rejoicing to discover that the laws of human nature coincide with the rules of classical critics or the dictates of orthodox morality.

The essential difference between science and criticism in the matter of authority is easily seen in comparing their concepts of a law. A scientific law is a statement of a general principle in nature, from which particular consequences can be drawn. A critical law, however, is much more like a law of society intended to regulate behaviour and maintain, if necessary by sanctions against offenders, a certain desired state of human affairs. The two kinds of law do not have as much in common as their shared name suggests. In short, as C.C. Gillispie says, speaking more generally /

generally, "the noble eighteenth-century faith in natural law involved a fundamental confusion between the declarative and the normative senses of law, between 'is' and 'ought'."¹

Philosophical criticism, therefore, is based on a confusing paradox. It attempts to re-establish the authority of the critic by justifying his standards, but it does so by appealing to the very intellectual movement which destroyed authoritarianism, at least in principle, in the first place. Close examination of the works of philosophical critics, therefore, reveals not only their debt to scientific thinking but also the way that thinking is distorted and put to unscientific uses. Such an examination will reveal not just what the critics were doing but why they failed to achieve their aims. It will incidentally discover the concepts transferred from natural philosophy into criticism.

All this requires an analysis of philosophical criticism which goes deeper than the classification of themes, the comparison of influence and the tracing of indebtedness to Classical or Continental sources. Rather what must be sought for are unconsidered metaphysical assumptions, patterns of thought which the writers take for granted or state as self-evident truths. Only by elucidating these can the detail of rules and examples be fitted into larger schemes and the distinctive, the "philosophical", nature of the eighteenth-century theories of taste and beauty be made apparent.

¹ Gillispie, p. 154.

CHAPTER II : DRYDEN

John Dryden's criticism is unsystematic and confusing. It consists of a variety of types of work, from occasional pieces, such as dedications, in which special pleading is evident, to the formal Essay of Dramatic Poesy, from which it is hard to extract Dryden's own opinions because of the problem of determining when the author of a dialogue speaks his own mind. From this mass of material, some of it so derivative as to be little better than translation from other writers, the task of bringing out the principles of Dryden's criticism seems impossible.

The common response to this has been to say that Dryden was an open-minded sceptic of a critic. He therefore never committed himself to consistent principles in criticism. Because of his sceptical turn of mind, Dryden was, it is said, naturally attracted by the scientific movement of his time - hence his involvement with the Royal Society. One might expect, then, to find in Dryden a precursor of eighteenth-century philosophical criticism.

To a certain extent this is true. But the attempt to justify this supposition about Dryden involves an examination of very basic ideas as they are found scattered in his criticism and reveals some genuine contradictions. If some of Dryden's more general remarks about art and criticism are closely analysed, they reveal a fundamentally unscientific attitude. Hence there is a real and fundamental confusion, not just a sceptical open-mindedness, in Dryden's thought. Although he appears on occasion to embrace the new philosophy, he retains older attitudes as well. This can be clearly seen in his attitude to the problem of authority, what it is about a work of art which justifies a favourable response from the critic. Dryden repeatedly asserts that the justification of art is its embodiment of an abstract concept, truth. Truth to him, however, means something different from scientific truth.

Dryden's /

Dryden's clearest statement of the authority of truth is in A Parallel Betwixt Painting and Poetry:

Truth is the object of our understanding, as good is of our will: and the understanding can no more be delighted with a lie than the will can choose an apparent evil. As truth is the end of all our speculations, so the discovery of it is the pleasure of them; and since a true knowledge of nature gives us pleasure, a lively imitation of it, either in poetry or painting, must of necessity produce a much greater. For both these arts, as I said before, are not only true imitations of nature, but of the best nature, of that which is wrought up to a nobler pitch. They present us with images more perfect than the life in any individual; and we have the pleasure to see all the scattered beauties of nature united by a happy chemistry, without its deformities or faults ... (Vol. 2, pp. 193-4)¹

The discovery of truth by the understanding causes pleasure, and the more truth, the more pleasure. Since knowledge of truth can be had of nature, nature is indirectly a source of pleasure. Now art imitates nature, so that acquaintance with art is like acquaintance with nature, that is to say, with indirect knowledge of truth, and is therefore pleasurable. The pleasure of art is, however, greater because it imitates nature heightened, that is, nature in which more than the usual amount of truth is discoverable. Because nature has "deformities or faults" it is less truthful than art, although the artist needs nature as the stuff on which to work.

Basically, the understanding performs the same operation on art as it does on nature. The process of discovering truth in nature is easier when the understanding is not dealing directly with nature but with an artistic imitation of "wrought up to a nobler pitch", with its "scattered beauties ... united by a happy chemistry". The artistic faculty which brings about imitation, then, is also able to make selections from nature, picking /

¹ References to Dryden's criticism are taken from Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays, 2 vols., edited George Watson, London, 1962.

picking out "beauties" or sources of pleasure, that is to say, truth.

There is an analogy between the truth-seeking operations of the understanding on nature, and the pleasure-giving imitation of nature by art.

The artist predigests the experience of nature and extracts from it the truth-bearing elements, which he then re-describes in an imitation of nature which ignores what is not perfectly truthful. The work of art is therefore a more concentrated version of nature, in which the truth, which incidentally is pleasant to discover, is emphasised. In a similar way the understanding, in dealing directly with nature, separates the true and untrue in its experience of nature, so that the final result is again a concentration of what is truthful about nature. What the man using his understanding regards as true and false is what the artist or critic regards as beautiful and deformed.

The process of artistic selection is therefore equivalent to the primary selective procedures of the understanding, when it decides what is true in nature. A so-called work of art which presented an imitation of nature which ignored the truthful and stressed what the understanding judged false would be unpleasant and hence a failure as art. Criticism, therefore, depends on an awareness of what the understanding regards as true. Art must conform to that standard to please.

The conformity of art and understanding manifests itself in the rules of art, which are nothing so much as the evidence that art is inherently a function of the understanding. Art is an interposed stage between nature and the understanding's discovery of truth, in which more truth can be discovered than in nature (presumably, in a given stretch of time¹) because art filters out what is not recognised as truthful.

¹ Since art imitates nature, it adds no beauties to nature's; hence an exhaustive study of nature and one of art would accumulate the same knowledge of truth and beauty, the difference being that studying art would be quicker and more intensely pleasant. Over any short period, however, say a human lifetime, more truth and more pleasure could be gained from art than /

As far as content is concerned, the artistic process is negative and destructive. Although art imitates nature, a full knowledge of art will be a less than full knowledge of nature. Conversely, a full knowledge of nature will contain too much for a knowledge of what art is, unless the understanding's principles of selection are also known. The concept of nature is thus too wide (even if Dryden gave more descriptive details) to be informative about what art distinguishes as true and pleasing. It is also too weak, since its part in his system, as the matrix of discoverable truth, is dictated by the idea of discovering truth.

In fact, good art imitates, not nature, but a select part of nature, "nature wrought up to a nobler pitch". Granted, if "the best nature" could be defined, it would provide a means of identifying its imitations and hence successful art. But this is only an indirect way of identifying the truth which pleases. To say art imitates the beauties of nature is only a circumlocution for saying art imitates the truth. The concept of imitating nature gives way to the concept of imitating truth, that is, the object of understanding.

Genuine /

than from nature, for time and energy would not be wasted comprehending the "deformities or faults" of nature. The way in which Dryden's theories thus lead on to the discussion of time is typical of the unseen relations of criticism with general philosophy. It is evident that neither time nor the natural universe is, for Dryden, logically beyond total comprehension, that is to say, infinite.

Genuine art, pleasing art, depends on what the understanding recognises as true. Details of what is nature and what is art would have significance in Dryden's scheme by virtue of their relation to the concepts of understanding and truth. Even the understanding is not autonomous, because as the discoverer of truth it is to be identified with those operations in which truth is actually discovered; such an identification cannot be made unless truth is known. The concept of truth defines what the understanding discovers with pleasure and therefore what is (successful) art. To say what art is about, it is not enough to say it is about nature or the imitation of nature; much must be added concerning truth. All that Dryden says of truth is that it is the object of understanding. This tends to reduce his system to tautology, with its parts all explained in terms of each other.

A possible objection here might be that Dryden's criticism provides plenty of evidence for deciding what he regards as art and what not, thus allowing a full specification of his system. It could be argued that there is a wealth of detail as evidence of what Dryden regarded as artistic, natural and truthful. Unfortunately, mediating principles of selection are missing. The range of possible examples of art, nature or truth is greater than those Dryden himself might give. If it is desired to extend his series of examples to include similar ones not mentioned by him, then some common property or properties must be selected as typical of all. But no-one except Dryden can define Dryden's types.

Thus, although it may well be that Dryden's critical judgments are co-ordinated with his theoretical scheme of art, it does not follow either that generalisations on his practice will coincide with the concepts of his theory and supply its defects, or that by extending his criticism by analogy his theory can legitimately be made to cover other examples than those /

those he himself gives. Dryden's theory lacks explanatory power; there is a gap between what he says art in general is, and what are, even what he says are, examples of art.

Two further points must be made. Dryden's scheme could be said to begin with truth and end in pleasure. Pleasure is another identifying feature of good art. Indeed, although all Dryden's other concepts - art, nature, truth, the understanding - seem emptily dependent on each other for meaning, the occurrence of pleasure seems less problematical. From it, one could discover what is successful art, natural beauty and truth. Dryden's theory of art, then, begins to look pleasure-centred; what is best in art is what pleases. In fact, since pleasure is the effect of the discovery of truth, where there is pleasure there is still truth. By aiming to please the artist also provides the opportunity of learning truth - that is to say, art instructs. Dryden states this in his Heads of an Answer to Rymer, numbers 47 and 48:

The chief end of the poet is to please; for his immediate reputation depends on it.

The great end of the poem is to instruct, which is performed by making pleasure the vehicle of that instruction; for poetry is an art, and all arts are made to profit. (Vol. 1, p. 219).

Elsewhere Dryden tends to emphasise the importance of pleasure as the end of poetry, because that is what distinguishes poetry (indeed, all art) from other human activities. But although he does for this reason claim, in A Defence of "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy", (Watson, vol. 1, p. 113f.), that "delight is the chief, if not the only end of poesy", he cannot fail to add that "poesy only instructs as it delights", thus repeating the association of delight with instruction. Otherwise poetry would not be an /

an activity or an interest of the truth-seeking understanding at all. Dryden's stress on pleasure in poetry can be misleading if it is forgotten how important is the idea of truth.

That is the second point. Dryden believes that art is truthful as well as pleasing and that any account of art must show how it is truthful. The understanding is for him directed to truth; no high or serious claims can be made for any activity which does not participate in the investigation of truth. Dryden does not doubt that art is ultimately justified thus:

Indeed the poet dresses truth, and adorns nature, but does not alter them:

*ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris.*¹

Therefore that is not the best poesy which resembles notions of things that are not to things that are: though the fancy may be great and the words flowing, yet the soul is but half satisfied when there is not truth in the foundation. (Vol. 1, pp. 120f)

The important conclusion to be drawn from this examination of some of Dryden's more theoretical remarks on art is not, however, that his conceptual scheme is tautologous or that truth is a prime value for him, but rather that he conceives of truth and nature as distinct, if related, entities. No matter how lacking are positive assertions about truth or nature, one negative proposition is clear: truth and nature are not equivalent. It follows that sheer knowledge of nature does not represent, for Dryden, knowledge of the truth.

In Dryden's view, truth is the object of the understanding. This object may be gained by studying nature for the truth it contains. The study of nature, therefore, is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It would be possible to know a great deal about nature without also knowing the /

¹ Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 1.338: 'Let fiction made for delight be near to the truth'. (Watson's note).

the truth at all (in such a case, the understanding would remain unsatisfied and no pleasure would, says Dryden, be taken in the investigation). Hence, knowledge of nature by itself is worthless and likely to hinder the quest of the understanding for its real goal, truth.

The strong impression given by Dryden is that truth is something behind nature and covered by it. The understanding can come at truth through nature, and the artist imitates truth by imitating nature. Truth, therefore, transcends nature. In contrast, the scientific revolution which was going on in Dryden's own lifetime was presenting an alternative arrangement, whereby truth represents the highest degree of accuracy of the correspondence of the understanding's ideas and concepts with the circumstances of nature, and the artist imitates nature by imitating truthfully. In this view, stated in extreme terms, the study of nature is an end in itself, and the study of truth a means to achieving that end.

Obviously such a reversal of roles alters the meaning of literary criticism. The pre-scientific work of art can claim a higher verisimilitude than likeness to nature. No degree of familiarity with natural phenomena will alone make a man a critic. The judge is he who knows the truth and can determine when it is being successfully imitated to give genuine pleasure worthy of the human understanding. The scientific critic, however, faces a very different task. He still wishes to praise the poet for telling the truth, but he means by that the truth about nature. A knowledge of natural phenomena is therefore indispensable to him. Consequently, he is vulnerable to the charge that his criticisms are false because his knowledge of what the work of art is about, his knowledge of nature, is inadequate.

A major part of criticism, then, becomes the attempt to state the reasons why the critic thinks his appreciation of what art is about is as good /

good as or better than the next man's. The first difficulty encountered by a scientific critic is the establishment of his authority, his claim to know and state the truth. And since truth means truth to nature, his first obligation is to show he grasps the principles of the true understanding of nature. By and large, these principles are those of science.

The critic who believes truth transcends nature of course must also convince others of his authority. An advantage he enjoys is that he has not constantly to convince himself; once he has the truth, no-one can take it from him against his will. The scientific critic can be forced to acknowledge that nature is not as he says it is; how the transcendental critic can be enjoined to recant his fundamental principles is a mystery. His authority cannot be questioned save by his leave.

It is clear enough that, at any rate in theory, Dryden is an authoritarian, not a scientific, critic. No natural evidence necessarily counts against a critical judgment. It is perfectly rational to admit that one thing appears to be the case yet continue asserting that the opposite is in fact the only truth:

The liking or disliking of the people gives the play the denomination of good or bad, but does not really make or constitute it such. To please the people ought to be the poet's aim, because plays are made for their delight; but it does not follow that they are always pleased with good plays, or that the plays which please them are always good. The humour of the people is now for comedy, therefore in hope to please them, I write comedies rather than serious plays; and so far their taste prescribes to me: but it does not follow from that reason that comedy is to be preferred before tragedy in its own nature; for that which is so in its own nature cannot be otherwise, as a man cannot but be a rational creature: but the opinion of the people may alter, and in another age, or perhaps in this, serious plays may be set up above comedies.

(Vol. 1, p.120).

Dryden here confesses that though he has consulted the preference of the public in writing plays he does not share that preference and indeed feels it is untrue. The truth about the relative values of comedy and tragedy is something he knows despite the experience of a career in the theatre. It is not a generalisation from the opinions, based on observation and experience, of men, but exists as an absolute beyond such opinions. True comparisons of value in criticism, therefore, do not derive from studies of the responses and reactions of human beings, but from knowledge of the absolute value of each work of art "in its own nature". Such idealism wanes in the eighteenth century. So great was the impact of empirical science that no eighteenth-century critic could remain as undisturbed as Dryden by evidence counter to his beliefs. This is because no eighteenth-century critic was unaware that truth could be, and had been, defined as the relation between opinions and the facts of nature.

In his attitude to truth, therefore, Dryden, at least in the cases considered here, is in contrast with the philosophical critics who, impressed by the empiricism of natural philosophy, attempted to secure their own principles on the same experimental basis. Dryden, who was both a critic and a member of the Royal Society, was nevertheless not a true philosophical critic. Indeed, he must be seen as a critic some of whose theories are more nearly related to the traditions of supernatural idealism and personal authority which science did so much to weaken. He may have asked, in the spirit of the Royal Society, "why should there be any Ipse dixit in our poetry, any more than there is in our philosophy?" (Vol. 1, p. 148), but he himself suggested a theory of art which actually justifies that kind of pronouncement.

In other respects, however, Dryden is like the philosophical critics. In the first place, he does show some interest in explicitly defining the authority /

authority of the critic. In other words, what is remarkable about Dryden's criticism is not the comparative lack of statements of principle but the presence of the few there are. Secondly, Dryden is like the philosophical critics in giving his concept of truth the function of a standard in criticism. The details are sketchy, but it does seem to be the case that he believed that the goodness or badness of a work of art depended on its truthfulness. To ascertain the truth of a work of art was therefore to judge it. Finally, both nature and emotion were prominent in Dryden's theories, as they are in later speculation about criticism. What does not survive is the distinction between truth and nature.

CHAPTER III : ADDISON

Compared with the case of Dryden, the influence of science on Joseph Addison's critical theory is obvious and deep. Addison's employment of the psychology of Locke and his advocacy of an empirical basis for criticism are enough to make him the first significant really "philosophical" critic of the eighteenth century, and as such his own influence was considerable. Yet he betrays a certain disquiet at the direction his theories take, and hints at a regret that the authority of scientific fact seems to be taking over from the charming rule of fancy. In Addison's work there are signs of a conflict of art and science, imagination and understanding. On the whole, Addison seems to believe that science and understanding are the mightier (and more truthful), though his sympathies are with the side of art and imagination.

Addison's most systematic effort at a theory of art is his series of essays on the pleasures of the imagination in numbers 411 to 421 of the Spectator. The beginnings of Addison's discussion are clear and concise enough for quotation:

...by the Pleasures of the Imagination or Fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean such as arise from visible Objects, either when we have them actually in our View, or when we call up their ideas into our Minds by Paintings, Statues, Descriptions, or any the like Occasion. We cannot indeed have a single image in the Fancy that did not make its first Entrance through the Sight; but we have the Power of retaining, altering and compounding those images, which we have once received, into all the Varieties of Picture and Vision that are most agreeable to the Imagination... (Spectator, 411).

In these few sentences Addison outlines the psychology of ideas and the empiricist appeal to an "outside" world of fixed objects as the justification of those ideas. The theory that the mind works with ideas which are related to the objects with which the senses have contact clearly has the consequence /

consequence that an idea which lacks such a correspondence with an object is false, indeed meaningless. Hence reference to real objects secures the meanings of ideas.

Addison avoids the difficulty that, if the mind never possesses an idea which has not been produced by the impression on the senses of an object, then no idea at all can be without a referent and hence meaningless or doubtful. Since, according to him, "we have the Power of retaining, altering and compounding those images", it is possible for the mind to pervert its ideas into things not accurately reflecting objects as experienced by the senses. There is therefore room for debates and decisions about the truth or falsity of ideas, that is to say, their correspondence with objects, which may have been distorted in the process of "altering and compounding" our ideas.

Thus, when Addison writes, in Spectator 523, that "no Thought is beautiful which is not just, and no Thought can be just which is not founded in Truth, or at least in that which passes for such", although he appears to agree with Dryden's emphasis on truth in beauty, and art, there is a fundamental difference. For Addison, truth is the correspondence of ideas in the mind with the objects which impinge on the senses; in Dryden truth is an independent entity discoverable by the understanding. What makes the data of art veracious for Addison is not, as it is for Dryden, that they are imitations of a nature in which truth is discoverable, but that they are derived accurately from a steady source of experience and reflect the objects in the real world.

The theory that the mind knows only ideas of objects and that the truth of its ideas is secured by their relation to these objects is, of course, a basically scientific notion. The world of observable objects plays the part of source-material for the mind and ultimate authority for its conclusions. Just as experiments verify scientific theories, experience verifies /

verified ideas. The theory of ideas, of course, is also basically atomistic, so that the question of how ideas combine and react together is capable of a quasi-mechanical answer.

But the psychology of ideas also has an unwelcome consequence, because it becomes impossible to secure the full authority of natural phenomena for human knowledge, although that would seem to be the theory's prime intention and value. If the mind knows objects by ideas of them, it is never actually in contact with the objects themselves. The mind therefore knows nothing but its ideas. Judgments about the truthfulness of ideas cannot then be based on anything else but other ideas. For a superhuman being able to know objects in themselves and simultaneously to observe human ideas of them, the comparative truth of the latter to the former could be investigated. But for human beings confined in their minds to examining only ideas, such a standard of truth is not possible. There is no appeal to anything more substantial than ideas.

Truth is not therefore entirely unknowable. Assuming some degree of permanence in the state of objects, the senses, and the mind, it is probable that ideas which resemble each other strongly have a common source in a stable object. Other, more complex relations among ideas might be compatible with similar conclusions. Absolute certainty may be unlikely, but high probability is possible. But the point is that what started as a concept of truth in which physical reality was a source of authority, a standard, has become a concept of truth relying on psychological investigations and the description of mental states. Addison, Burke, Kames and Gerard all adopt psychological speculation as a means to establish the principles of taste and criticism, almost as if they were deliberately avoiding the difficulty that the psychology of ideas does not in fact permit the direct appeal to objective reality it seemed to allow.

Whether /

Whether in fact Addison recognised the problem or not, he avoided it by turning his attention to emotional responses. These he could plausibly represent as caused by qualities in objects. Hence the emotional "ideas" of objects would be as closely and stably related to their respective objects as effects to causes. Addison thus reduces the meaning of knowledge to an automatic recording capacity. It must be admitted that that is not an unfair reading of the psychology of ideas, and suggests how opposite that psychology appeared to Addison for explaining the pleasures of the imagination.

Addison divides these pleasures into two kinds. The primary pleasures of the imagination arise from objects actually before the observer. Objects "Great, Uncommon or Beautiful" (Spectator 412) are seen and immediately please. The validity of these pleasures is dependent on the existence of the objects perceived. Addison here speaks of objects, and not ideas, which give pleasure. Deliberately or not, he is vague about whether primary pleasures result from direct knowledge of the real qualities of things rather than of the ideas created of the things for the mind by the senses. This vagueness disguises the problem of verification.

The secondary pleasures, on the other hand, involve ideas, not objects: "it is in the Power of the Imagination, when it is once Stocked with particular ideas, to enlarge, compound and vary them at her own Pleasure" (Spectator 416). That is to say, the secondary pleasures of the imagination are so on the grounds of their agreeableness to the imagination itself; and since this secondary pleasure arises from the comparing of ideas, not from the ideas themselves, or their objects, it appears that the imagination, once stocked, can amuse itself without reference to any object at all. It might be said, therefore, that Addison is exploiting the logical disharmony of the theory of ideas to fashion a distinctive role for the imagination.

He /

He goes even further. Since ideas are still supposed to be the result of perception of objects, any idea the mind has presupposes an object to stimulate it. Hence, the imagination, he says in his last paper, "has something in it like Creation: it bestows a kind of Existence, and draws up to the Reader's View, several objects which are not to be found in Being".

The scheme of primary and secondary pleasures has a distinguished precedent, well known to Addison, in the division of the qualities of objects into primary and secondary made by Locke. In discussing one of the final causes of the primary pleasures of imagination, Addison himself explains the difference between primary and secondary qualities: "Light and Colours, as apprehended by the imagination", he writes in Spectator 413, "are only ideas in the Mind, and not Qualities that have any Existence in Matter".

Now there is clearly a parallelism between the scheme of two kinds of qualities and that of two kinds of pleasure. In particular, both schemes have a second term which is more intimately psychical; that is to say, the secondary qualities and the secondary pleasures are both more inherently functions of the mind, psychological states, than their primary counterparts. And since without a human mind they may very well not exist, they tend to seem more human, too. Indeed, the secondary qualities of objects were created by God expressly for the pleasure of human beings, it seems. "Things would make but a poor appearance to the Eye", says Addison in Spectator 413, "if we saw them only in their proper Figures and Motions: And what Reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from any thing that exists in the Objects themselves, (for such are Light and Colours) were it not to add Supernumerary Ornaments to the Universe, and make it more agreeable to the imagination?"

Addison's reference to the primary qualities of objects as their proper figures and motions implies his awareness that the distinction between /

between primary and secondary qualities is a scientific, a "philosophical", theory. The mathematical reduction of objects to figures and motions, which had so helped the progress of mechanics, was elevated to a metaphysical proposition. A qualitative difference was postulated between the geometrical characteristics of bodies, their size and movements, which were thought to be objectively described by mathematical means, and those qualities - colour, taste, smell and so on - which seemed to depend on a relationship with a sentient observer, a human being. The primary qualities could be, and had been, mathematically defined; the secondary ones, on the whole, could not - or at least they had not been submitted to quantification in Addison's time. Hence the primary qualities were regarded as impersonally and objectively demonstrated, whereas the secondary qualities were still only described from personal points of view. The primary qualities and the secondary qualities therefore differed as science did from unscientific thinking, which was uncertain and usually prejudiced.

In the distinction between primary and secondary qualities there is a clear contrast between the nature of the universe as it really is and as it appears to be to human experience. The apparent world of secondary qualities is confined to the mind. If art principally concerns itself with secondary qualities then it is similarly circumscribed in its subject matter. The drawback is that if truth is the accurate correspondence of ideas with the objects which stimulate them, an idea corresponding to a secondary quality is somehow as true to human experience as but less true to the real world than an idea derived from a primary quality. Conversely, an idea derived from a primary quality must be true to things as they are humanly experienced and to things as they really are. The superiority of primary-quality descriptions over secondary-quality descriptions as knowledge of the world is evident, while the appeal of secondary-quality descriptions to human nature is no less so. Addison thus finds himself in a position to compare and contrast art and science.

Addison /

Addison does this by discussing non-fictional writing in Spectator 420. After describing some of the pleasures provided the imagination by "the Authors of the new Philosophy", he goes on to assert that unfortunately what is scientifically acceptable concerning the vastness of the universe or the minuteness of microscopic creatures is inconceivable to the imagination:

The Understanding, indeed, opens an infinite Space on every side of us, but the Imagination, after a few faint Efforts, is immediately at a stand, and finds her self swallowed up in the Immensity of the Void that surrounds it: Our Reason can pursue a Particle of Matter through an infinite variety of Divisions, but the Fancy soon loses sight of it, and feels in it self a kind of Chasm, that wants to be filled with Matter of a more sensible Bulk.

Evidently something (and it is noteworthy that here it is a written statement) may be scientifically true, that is, Addison would doubtless agree, true of things as they are, but not be capable of being entertained by (or of entertaining) the imagination. Addison here makes an explicit opposition of the understanding and the imagination in the context of credibility and truthfulness. An earlier passage is relevant, in which Addison strangely speaks of the pleasures of the understanding:

[The pleasures of the understanding] are, indeed, more preferable, because they are founded on some new knowledge or improvement in the Mind of Man; yet it must be confest, that those of the imagination are as great and as transporting as the other.

(Spectator 411)

What the pleasures of the imagination are founded on begins to seem different from truth as it is recognised by the understanding. The imaginative is being forced further and further from the secure basis of /

of empirical, scientific truth; correspondingly, the understanding and its science are being edged into an unpleasant world of cold facts where the imagination has limited power. The drift in Addison's thinking is towards a division of everything into the imaginable and the unimaginable.

Addison's attitude to the imagination is not entirely straightforward, however. The importance to it of secondary qualities means that "our Souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion, and we walk about like the Enchanted Hero of a Romance" (Spectator 413). There is surely something equivocal about this picture of the world of secondary qualities. Delusion and romance, however pleasant, are not truthful. Secondary qualities, writes Addison earlier in the same paper, provide "Supernumerary Ornaments to the Universe" so that "we are every where entertained with pleasing Shows and Apparitions". Addison's metaphors suggest the pleasure of secondary qualities, but they also imply their unreality and deceptiveness.

Further signs of ambivalence in Addison can be revealed by returning to his remarks on the final causes of the pleasures of the imagination. The four final causes of the primary pleasures are all ordained by God, who, as the source of all goodness, thus lends those pleasures moral value and ultimate justification. Obviously, Addison at this point retains an old-fashioned, pre-scientific way of thinking.

The first of the final causes makes greatness pleasing in order to encourage the worship of the deity. This idea is a clear gesture in the direction of orthodox moral sentiment, which Addison shares. What is perhaps remarkable is that this is neither the only final cause of pleasure nor the one which occupies most of Addison's attention.

The second cause makes novelty pleasing in order to encourage the search for knowledge of the creation. The third makes members of one species /

species mutually pleasing in order to encourage propagation. This hints at a biological theory of pleasure, not developed by Addison, but prominent in Burke. The fourth cause makes objects beautiful by means of "secondary qualities" in order that "the whole Creation [may be] more gay and delightful" (Spectator 413). The final cause of the secondary pleasures, of comparison of ideas, is the encouragement and improvement of the mind's search for truth by "observing the Congruity or Disagreement that appears among the several Works of Nature" (Spectator 416).

Addison regards four things, it would seem, as self-evidently valuable: the worship of God, the propagation of the species, the pursuit of knowledge and, simply, pleasure. The acceptance of both the last two is the source of the ambivalence in the essays on the pleasures of the imagination. If God can decide his creation shall be pleasant for the sake of it, then the pleasures of the imagination are justified independently of the satisfaction of the understanding; but if He also made it pleasant in order to encourage its investigation then He leaves the artist, and the critic, in a quandary. For then the pleasures of the imagination are justified, not in themselves, but by their result in terms of knowledge. Thus Addison is undecided whether the imagination's interest in pleasure is justified in its own terms, or as it leads to true knowledge of the world.

Such indecisiveness about the justification of pleasure means that Addison must also be indecisive about the justification of critical judgments. The alternatives he presents the critic are plain. He could insist that the scientific inaccuracy of a work of art, its failure to make a contribution to knowledge of the world, no matter how pleasing, debars it from his approbation; or he could insist that a work no matter how scientifically accurate is artistically inept because it fails to please /

please. Works could be judged as true to external reality, or true to feeling; but in both cases the truth would be a relation between the signs and symbols of the work and a set of other data, whether physical or psychological.

Whatever the confusions raised by the psychology of ideas, whether ideas or objects are the sources of pleasure, the form of the justification of critical judgments is clear enough. It will consist of references to facts, experimental observations, either of objects, or of human responses. It is because this cannot be doubted that Addison is to be classed as a philosophical critic, one for whom a scientific attitude is basic.

In conclusion, then, let us return to Addison's remarks on the psychological justification of critical principles, the causes of pleasure, in Spectator 413:

Though in Yesterday's Paper we consider'd how every thing that is Great, New or Beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with Pleasure, we must own that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary Cause of this Pleasure, because we know neither the Nature of an Idea, nor the Substance of a Human Soul, which might help us to discover the Conformity or Disagreeableness of the one to the other...

What Addison rejects here is the possibility, in his time, of a physical or mechanical explanation of the reaction of an idea with the mind. This is not because he thinks such an explanation of the mind's workings inappropriate or undesirable. On the contrary, he regrets not being able to extend mechanical knowledge into psychology. The reason for this inability is simply that there is no evidence of what ideas and the mind are like from which to suggest how they affect each other.

At about the same time as Addison wrote, Newton himself was speculating /

speculating about a subtle fluid which carries information along the nerves to the brain, into a receptive area he called the "sensorium". It is just that sort of theorising that Addison rejects. Instead, he suggests an empirical investigation which will ignore microscopic questions of actual causes in favour of more widely-focussed descriptions of pleasurable situations:

...all that we can do in Speculations of this kind, is to reflect on those Operations of the Soul that are most agreeable, and to range, under their proper Heads, what is pleasing or displeasing to the Mind, without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient Causes from whence the Pleasure or Displeasure arises.

(Spectator 413).

In this suggestion Addison parallels Newton's response to the problem of the cause of gravity. Newton had thoughts on this, but was unwilling to be free with them. He refused to see any fault in his theory of gravity, however, because it lacked positive assertions about a cause. Instead, he stressed the descriptive accuracy of his mathematical formulations of the forces involved and held that such success in application was sufficient. How gravity operates over vast distances was a mystery, but that it does and does so more or less according to the laws Newton proposed was, in his view, indisputable. Similarly, Addison regarded it as a mystery how ideas interacted with the soul (or mind) to produce pleasure, but that they did so was evident and he believed the instances could be observed and usefully formulated, in the manner of natural laws.

Newton's derivation of his law of gravity depended for its persuasive mathematical precision on Kepler's laws of planetary motion, which in turn were derived from the accurate astronomical data collected by Tycho Brahe. Without those facts, Newton's achievements in celestial mechanics would have been impossible.

What /

What Addison proposes is in effect that the facts of the pleasures of the imagination must be similarly collated and classified, with a view, presumably, to ever more powerful generalisation. Without such data (and obviously Addison felt it was lacking in his time) the Newton of taste could not appear.

Bacon had made a similar demand for factual investigations at the beginning of the seventeenth century; perhaps Addison felt that to repeat it at the beginning of the eighteenth with respect to taste, the imagination, pleasure and criticism would further the scientific revolution with which Bacon was credited. In short, Addison suggests a research programme, an investigation of pleasure in a scientific way. Although he was ambivalent about scientific values and shows some preference for secondary pleasures, secondary qualities, the artistic and the strictly human, his recommendation to the critic is to become a natural philosopher of the imagination, a scientist of taste. Burke, Kames and Gerard, in producing work of the kind Addison seems to request, fulfil the role he specifies; whether they were aware that they did so or not, it is difficult to say.

One remaining question is why Addison thought it important to explain the pleasures of the imagination. In Spectator 409, in which he announces his series of papers on the pleasures of the imagination, he also wishes that there were critics "who beside the Mechanical Rules which a Man of very little Taste may discourse upon, would enter into the very Spirit and Soul of fine Writing, and shew us the several Sources of that Pleasure which rises in the Mind upon the Perusal of a noble Work". Apparently Addison's interest in the pleasures of the imagination is a result of a dissatisfaction with the traditional rules of formal criticism, and a positive interest in the explanation of the emotional reactions literature evokes. These attitudes are typical of the eighteenth-century critics.

What /

What is missing in Addison is a concern with criticism as a process of judgment. He devotes his attention to the description of taste and art, rather than to the standard of taste.

CHAPTER IV : BURKE

The proposition that the eighteenth-century theorists of taste and criticism were much influenced by "philosophical", that is, scientific, modes of thought is particularly helpful in considering Edmund Burke's Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.¹ It explains what Burke thought he was doing, and indeed how he was, and continues to be, misunderstood. Too many facile restatements of his conclusions have obscured the intellectually demanding structure of his work and its serious purpose. Attention to his theoretical ground-work not only reveals his "philosophical" attitude, but also his interesting, if ultimately unsatisfactory, efforts both to apply and to alter that style of thought.

That theory is important in Burke, and that he felt his was neglected, he himself avowed, especially in the second edition of his book. To that edition Burke not only added an "Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste" but also a short preface. In the course of this he comments on the reception of his work. These observations are a good starting-point for an interpretation of the Enquiry. The basis of Burke's criticism of his critics lies in the following remarks concerning theory:

The task would be infinite, if we could establish no principle until we had previously unravelled the complex texture of every image or description to be found in poets and orators. And though we should never be able to reconcile the effect of such images to our principles, this can never overturn the theory itself, whilst it is founded on certain and indisputable facts. A theory founded on experiment and not assumed, is always good for so much as it explains. Our inability to push it indefinitely is no argument at all against it. (Second edition preface, pp. 4f).

¹ Quotations from Burke's Enquiry will here be identified by reference first to the Part and Section of the work, and then by page reference to the reprint of the second edition, edited by James T. Boulton, London, 1958.

Thus Burke outlines his conception of the theory of experimental science. This is the foundation of one of the most serious, and explicit, if slightly misdirected, attempts to extend Newtonianism into the non-Newtonian fields of social science.

It may well be asked how adequate, how scientific is this theoretical background of Burke's. The first point he makes seems very sound: that if all the evidence had to be analysed before theorising could commence it would in fact never begin. But this is really only obvious to those who share the view that the amount of significant information is or is likely to be infinite. In such a case the preliminary evidence for a theory, its premises, must be a selection. Burke successfully brings out that the modern concept of infinity forces selectivity on a theorist.

He is not so explicit, however, on another point. An infinite quantity of evidence is a daunting prospect. Obviously it cannot be comprehended as a whole by any individual. To make sense of it some sort of organised response would seem necessary, else one would be overwhelmed by an apparently amorphous mass of detail.

Imagine one letter-sorter in a small bare room; if he is handed a couple of dozen letters he has floor space to set them out with every address visible. But if he is given a couple of thousand letters, he has to cover some with others and in order to find them again if required he will need some simple system to guide his search for a letter not necessarily openly displayed. No system at all will mean chaos, just as in the face of the infinite universe no theory at all will mean incoherency and incomprehension.

Theory itself becomes valuable. The impulse to scientific theorising is a consequence of the recognition of the infinity of things. Burke, however, does not give this or any other reason for assuming that any theory is better than none.

It /

It is another respect, however, that Burke's discussion is most unsatisfactory, and that is in the distinguishing of the relative values of different theories. In fact, so intent is he on justifying the adoption of any theory that the kind he describes is peculiarly resistant to comparative criticism, and perhaps even impossible to reject. For in arguing for the acceptability of a theory based on a selection of the available evidence he dangerously weakens the significance of possible counter-examples.

The development of an experimental theory is, according to Burke, the result of two processes. First, there is the derivation of general principles from the selection of data which is the preliminary evidence; this is induction. Second, there is the derivation from these principles of the theory as a whole, by means of deduction. Induction must, says Burke, be performed on as much evidence as possible: "the greater number of these comparisons we make, the more general and the more certain our knowledge is like to prove, as built upon a more extensive and perfect induction" (Preface p.4). A similar maxim for the deduction is less easily stated. Burke writes: in considering any complex matter, we ought to examine every distinct ingredient in the composition, one by one; and reduce every thing to the utmost simplicity; since the condition of our nature binds us to a strict law and very narrow limits" (ibid.). What the "strict law" is it is difficult to say; perhaps Burke is thinking of the way in which science seems to choose between rival explanations by preferring the simpler theory offered.

Be that as it may, it can at least be said where Burke thinks real criticism can be applied; it can be directed at the formation of a theory in its inductive and deductive stages. The trouble is that Burke virtually restricts criticism to this narrow range, ruling out, for instance, the criticism of applicability:

The objections, in my opinion, ought to be proposed, either to the several principles as they are distinctly considered, or to the justness /

justness of the conclusion which is drawn from them. But it is common to pass over both the premises and conclusion in silence, and to produce as an objection, some poetical passage which does not seem easily accounted for upon the principles I endeavour to establish. This manner of proceeding I should think very improper.

(Preface, p.4)

It is interesting that Burke should choose just this point to make against his critics. The central topic is clearly the status of anomalies in relation to a theory.

Ruling out, correctly, the possibility of a theory based on an induction from all the evidence, Burke cannot deny that the data upon which his principles rest are a selection. But he is confident that, provided the theory is securely derived in an accurate inductive/deductive process, it is true for that selection. It will also be true of the whole class of instances from which the selection is taken. If the theory is to be extended beyond its premises, the class of evidence it is true of must exceed the selection of evidence upon which it is based. The problem is that the evidence for identifying the class of data relevant is the same as the evidence from which the theor itself is derived.

Since a fundamental feature of each item of the selection of evidence which supports a true theor is that the theor explains it, the whole class of evidence covered by the theory must also have the characteristic of being able to be explained by the theory. And since a theory is true because it explains the data on which it is based, in the sense of being competently derived from them, it follows that a theory which survives criticism at this stage cannot fail to explain any relevant instance; an anomaly, therefore, can only be apparent or irrelevant.

If /

If the seeming anomaly is indeed in the class of instances covered by the theory, then it must, ipso facto, be explicable by the theory, and hence is not really anomalous; if it is truly inexplicable, then it is not in the class of relevant data. Hence no evidence can contradict a true theory, for there are no genuine counter-examples. Nor, indeed, can counter-examples be used against an untrue theory, for the fault lies rather in the derivation, the internal consistency of the theory with the principles and the consistency of those in turn with the data upon which they are based. For Burke "anomalies" are not faults in the theory; he sees them rather as faults in the use of the theory, compounded of human error and incapacity:

This inability [to push a theory indefinitely] may be owing to our ignorance of some necessary mediums; to a want of proper application; to many other causes besides a defect in the principles we employ.

In reality the subject requires a much closer attention, than we dare claim from our manner of treating it. (Preface, p.5)

As far as Burke is concerned, producing "some poetical passage which does not seem easily accounted for upon the principles I endeavour to establish" is a confession of weakness on the part of the objector rather than a reflection on the theory.

Burke's position is, of course, tautologous. Explicability and relevance are defined in terms of each other; anything a theory can explain is relevant, anything it cannot is irrelevant. Burke excludes a middle group, of things which are not explained, yet are relevant; which could be explained, but are not.

He probably does this because of his attitude to truth. A theory correctly derived from experimental premises must be true at least in those instances; it was perhaps unthinkable to Burke that it could be less than true /

true for all other relevant evidence. That would suggest that a theory could be true and not true at the same time - an absurd situation for Burke.

He avoids recognising this possible absurdity by stressing the inviolable truth of a well-formed theory. Irreconcilable data "can never overturn the theory itself, whilst it is founded on certain and indisputable facts" (Preface, p.5). He does not allow that the explanatory potential of a theory as estimated at any given time is an approximation, a suggestion of what might be explained rather than of what will be explained. Nor does he permit the truth of a theory to fall below one hundred per cent, into some degree of probability. In no case can a true theory be allowed to fail.

In infallible theory cannot be wrongly applied. Potentially its applicability is unlimited, that is to say, the class of relevant data to which it applies has no boundaries. Hence the argument returns to the problem of what it is the true theory does and, perhaps more significant, does not explain. On Burke's showing, the answer is all-embracing. The alternative is dire. Since the theory cannot fail in application, it must, if it is not to be applied to anything and everything, be prevented from being applied in some cases. Because there is no way of telling afterwards whether any particular application of a true theory was its ultimate, extreme success, since all applications are equally successful, no failure being possible, there is nothing left but to try to say beforehand whether any instance is relevant to the theory; in effect, it is prevented from failing by being prevented from being applied.

Thus, our letter-sorter has filled his small, bare room to the ceiling not only with letters but with anything and everything handed in to him, on the principle that since he is a letter-sorter anything he is given must be a letter for sorting. Now, faced with a mound of rubbish, his only /

only recourse, if he is not to abandon his theory of what is a letter (a theory which has not failed him in many, many trials), is to cease taking in things at the door. His theory thus remains intact, while he can still regard it as about something rather than everything (and nothing).

In this case, however, it is clear, not so much how, but by whom the decision is reached to set a limit to the application of the theory. In the more general case Burke presents, it is not so apparent who would decide where the theory ceases. Clearly that person would claim in some sense to know when the theory is and is not to be applied, but such knowledge would not be obtainable from the practice of applying the theory, since that is uniformly successful. This knowledge must surely therefore be something special. The grounds for such a special insight are mysterious. Who could make such a claim?

Whoever did would simultaneously claim a privileged position and authority to go with it. He it would be who pretended to know the class of evidence to which the theory applied, that is, the meaning of the theory. With such knowledge he would have the power to approve or disapprove of other people's use of the theory. This is close to the position Burke occupies.

Such an authoritarian attitude is not a scientific one. Neither the meaning nor the conditions of application of a scientific theory are determined simply by authoritarian declarations. The scientific attitude is in fact the opposite of Burke's in this respect. It has given up the notion of absolute proven truth and regards the results of induction tentatively. Science admits the possibility that what was supposed to be the kind of evidence covered by the theory could include recalcitrant material. The value of the theory depends therefore on tests of it, or the volume of applications, by which its limits of operation can be ascertained. A scientific theory must extend to data which are not included /

included in its premises and which are not fore-defined as explicable by the theory; that is to say, a theory, to be scientific, must be falsifiable, not proof against fallibility. To claim that a theory can never be overturned is to render it unscientific. Theories of the type Burke describes are in this respect unscientific; science takes risks with its theories, Burke tries to protect his type of theory from failure.

The disturbing feature brought out by this analysis of Burke's understanding of the theory of the experimental method is not so much that he has wrong ideas about science as that they have such an unwelcome tendency. They contradict, by leaning towards authoritarianism, the signs of open-mindedness displayed by Burke. "The true standard of the arts" he writes, "is in every man's power" (I, xix, p.54). It seems to be a noble invitation to free discussion, and no doubt Burke would by and large have accepted this imputation. But in fact the role of criticism is very much restricted by Burke, and the significance of tests of a theory is even more curtailed by him.

The centre of the problem is his concept of truth. Although the true standard of the arts is in every man's power, it is not in all men's possession. If any man in fact discovers the true standard, then he is privileged above all others who have it not. He can hardly consent to change his ideas to compromise with those who do not know the truth, no matter how large a majority they constitute. The assumption is that truth is immutable and not open to discussion. On this basis authoritarianism is a logical outcome which cannot be glossed over by a display of liberal-mindedness. It is obvious that authoritarian knowledge, based on the idea of proven truth, rather than falsifiable theories, is not capable of much development. It is therefore incompatible with a belief in the infinite variety of the universe.

A clue to the origin of Burke's theorising about science is provided in /

in the nineteenth section of Part IV of the Enquiry; he is discussing the physical cause of love:

The universal voice of mankind, faithful to their feelings, concurs in affirming this uniform and general effect; and although some odd and particular instance may perhaps be found, wherein there appears a considerable degree of positive pleasure, without all the characters of relaxation, we must not therefore reject the conclusion we had drawn from a concurrence of many experiments, but we must still retain it, subjoining the exceptions which occur according to the judicious rule laid down by Sir Isaac Newton in the third book of his Optics. (IV,xix, p. 150).

Although in this passage, added to the second edition of the Enquiry, Burke admits the possibility of exceptions, he gives them no significance, and a theory is left intact by them. One turns to the "judicious rule" of Newton in the hope of finding Burke has misunderstood his great mentor. The reference seems to be to the penultimate paragraph of the Opticks.¹

Frankly, the passage is obscure. It is not clear what part exceptions play in the development of a Newtonian theory. Newton provides insufficient grounds for suggesting that a theory is subject to drastic revision in the face of anomalies, nor does he explicitly support Burke in saying that exceptions should simply be added to the theory as codicils and no more. On the crucial point of what to do when the number of exceptions reaches a high level, Newton is silent. When J.T. Boulton declares that "the Enquiry... is indeed a prize example of Newtonian experimental methods applied to aesthetics" (p. xxviii), he can be met with only qualified agreement.

The foregoing examination of Burke's theoretical assumptions serves two purposes. First, it proves that Burke had a scientific intent, supported /

¹ See Appendix I.

supported by an attempt at a philosophy of science. But in the second place a critical consideration of his theories shows that they are not truly scientific and tend towards an authoritarian standpoint. His misconceptions of science have this result, however, despite opposite intentions, and indeed partly because of his good intentions. To demonstrate this it is necessary to give an exposition of the Enquiry, especially as a psychological study.

As such it is almost entirely confined to the emotions, which Burke prefers to call the passions. He begins by asking what must be the case if an object excites passion. The most primitive mode of excitement he finds is novelty, the appeal to curiosity, but this clearly loses its force as the individual increases his experience. The more lasting emotional quality which is the basis of most of the passions for Burke is the capability to excite pleasure or pain. For adult human beings an object is capable of rousing passion if it is pleasing or painful. It may, however, be neither, and hence be indifferent; Burke is anxious to establish this third possibility, partly because he wants to claim that emotional excitement, the exercise of the soul's "finer organs", whether pleasing or painful, is itself, at least in moderation, positively desirable.

The various passions can be classified as those of self-preservation and those of society; the first are, generally, painful, and the second, generally, pleasant. Some passions can be mixtures of pleasure and pain, and indeed it seems that no passion, according to Burke, is a pure form of either. In addition, Burke asserts that the absence or cessation of pain is not a positive pleasure, but rather a special sensation he distinguishes as delight, a modification of pain; similar modifications of pleasure are possible.

Most of these points are made in Part I of the Enquiry. They have to do with what Burke calls the "final causes" of passion. In a sense they are /



are definitions of key terms in his psychology, which he will prove by illustration in considering particular examples of passions, especially those associated with the sublime and beautiful. In another sense they are a description, given that objects do arouse passions, of what must, thinks Burke, be the case regarding them and the beings that respond.

The justification of such preliminary generalisations in Burke's theoretical scheme is, however, far from obvious. Their position at the beginning of Burke's Enquiry raises the suspicion that they are a priori statements, not the inductions from observed events which Burke's theory seems to demand. Basic experimental research clearly begins only in Part II.

There it is stated that objects with the quality of the sublime produce in the observer modified pain or delight in the form of astonishment. Astonishment is like the passions of fear and danger, or, to speak even more broadly, terror. The likeness, however, although it includes the quality of threat which induces these passions of self-preservation, does not extend to the capacity for actual destruction, that is to say, the carrying out of the threat. There is a subtle distinction, then, between sublime objects, says Burke, which cause modified terror or astonishment, and really terrifying experiences. This subtlety is not however invariably maintained by Burke, who tends to talk of sublime objects as though they are just like terrifying ones.

Beautiful objects produce a pleasant passion which is a modified form of lust. The difference is in the absence of desire; lust minus desire Burke calls love. He also divides it into sexual, having for its object individuals of the opposite sex, and social, having for its object mankind (and animals) in general, a form of sympathy. Addison similarly divides the beautiful into the sexual, as an encouragement to propagation, and the merely pleasing (Spectator, 413).

What /

What Burke seems to want is to preserve the use of the word "beauty" as a commendation of individuals (that is, women), and yet also extend it to sympathetic responses and "soft" emotions generally. On the whole this leads to confusion, especially as the qualities of beautiful objects he lists - smallness, smoothness, gradual variation, delicacy, clarity or diversity of colour - seem of a different order of discourse, not usually being thought of as lovable qualities. Some explanation of this difficulty is provided, however, in the fourth part, when the physical cause of love is considered.

Burke believes that physical changes in the body affect one's state of mind, and vice versa. Although he regards mind and body as distinct from each other, yet he conceives their operations as inextricably linked, in ways not completely discernible:

I do not pretend that I shall ever be able to explain, why certain affections of the body produce such a distinct emotion of mind, and no other; or why the body is at all affected by the mind, or the mind by the body. (IV, i, p. 129)

He does think it possible and useful, however, to examine how this interaction takes place, and to set out which bodily occurrences go with which passions.

Burke's reluctance to claim that complete knowledge of the mind/body system and hence of the way emotion is stimulated is possible recalls Addison's similar diffidence concerning the possibility of providing an explanation of the causes of the pleasures of the imagination.¹ Instead he, like Burke, suggests the humbler task of gathering information about what pleases and displeases the mind and arranging the details under headings, since it is impossible to give the necessary and efficient causes of such pleasures /

¹ Spectator 413, first paragraph. See pp.38ff.

pleasures and displeasures. Addison does not himself embark formally on this ambitious project, although many details of his discussion of how the imagination is pleased count towards it, but Burke does.

His general conclusions are as follows. The passions of fear and danger are accompanied by symptoms of physical tension. If the body is made tense, then the mind will experience terror; if the mind is in a state of terror, the body will go tense. In a mild degree such a state is not positively painful, but rather gives the hybrid state of delight. This is because the exercise of the finer organs which respond to the fearful is a positive need of the human organism. To encourage such exercise, an experience that provides mild shocks to the system is considered delightful; such experiences constitute the sublime. All Burke has to show is that the several qualities he has identified as characteristic of sublime objects and experiences indeed cause the state of mild tension in the body which is delightful.

The passion of love, on the other hand, is associated, not with a tension, but with a relaxation of the body. Such a relaxation, which is pleasant, is to be distinguished from the indifferent state of rest. Just as sublime objects cause tension, beautiful objects cause a nervous relaxation which causes the passion of love. Burke proceeds to demonstrate that the qualities he calls beautiful are relaxing. It is for this reason that smallness, smoothness, gradual variation and so on are related to sexual admiration and social feeling. Sublime objects can be seen as modifications of terrifying objects; beautiful objects are not so much modifications of love-objects as sharers with them in the capacity to induce relaxation.

In this outline can be seen the stages of Burke's theoretical structure. By induction from the many several qualities of objects "experimentally" considered, in Parts II and III, the passions roused by the sublime and the beautiful /

beautiful are discovered. From an analysis of these is deduced a statement of what generally constitutes, or causes, them. The answer turns out to be two effects of objects on the body/mind system, physical tension and fear in the case of the sublime, physical relaxation and love in the case of the beautiful.

The neat opposition of tension and relaxation is suspicious, and the suggestion might be made that Burke's findings are perhaps controlled more by a wish for symmetry than by experimental fact, scrutinised without prejudice. But this is not much more than a debater's point, and doubtless Burke would not consider it worth his notice.

Burke expected criticism of a different kind. He felt that the question his critics should have asked themselves was whether the features he had selected in fact caused the emotions he said they did and whether they shared with those emotions the property of causing tension or relaxation. Such criticism would lead to refinements in his theory, but not, perhaps, to a radical change in it, or the postulation of a serious rival.

To produce an example of, say, poetry and claim it was sublime but not astonishing meant nothing to him, because he could not consider it as sublime, that is, classifiable with all the examples he had collected in his book, unless it had that quality. The objector would be forced to find something else about his example which made it (for him at least) sublime, hence erecting a new theory, but on a much more limited basis than Burke's. Since he could not therefore take such an insubstantial theory as a serious alternative, Burke regarded its empirical base as only a minor difficulty no doubt soluble in time. If his theory was right, local problems could surely be overcome with practice. The logical foundation for this confidence, and the accompanying disadvantages, have already been discussed.

If the significant part of the Enquiry is its theory, rather than its examples /

examples, then it is to that theory that attention ought to be directed. "Yet" says Boulton, "it must be said at once, that among those of his contemporaries and successors who carried on the debate on beauty and sublimity and allied topics, Burke's theories caused scarcely a tremor" (p. lxxxii). This is hardly surprising, since a large measure of the theorising centres, not on the sublime and the beautiful, but on the psychology of emotion. Because of the detailed accounts in the book of the nature of those two qualities, in Burke's effort to reproduce the experimental method, this fact may be missed. The point can be made by drawing attention to the way the popular abbreviation of the title is misleading. Burke did not call his work The Sublime and Beautiful¹ but A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. Of at least equal status with the last four words in the preceding phrase, "the origin of our ideas".

There are dangers here, though. It is too easy to assume that Burke follows Locke in regard to ideas. In Part I, however, he uses the word "idea" of such things as pain and danger:

Most of the ideas which are capable of making a powerful impression on the mind, whether simply of Pain or Pleasure, or of the modifications of those... (I, vi, p. 38)

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger... (I, vii, p. 39)

It is according to this difficult usage that the word appears in the title.

But perhaps more significant is the word "origin". In a primary sense this refers to the objects whose qualities cause the experience of the sublime or beautiful and hence give the ideas of them, but in another sense /

¹ This title appears with the fourteenth edition, Oxford, 1796 (Boulton, Appendix, pp. 176-182).

sense it refers to the physical effects, tension and relaxation, which Burke identifies as mediate causes of the relevant passions. The full title, then, directs attention to those features of the work which have here been stressed as centrally important.

What, then, of Burke's account of the origins of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful? An obvious feature is his debt to eighteenth-century empiricism, his claim that the ideas of the sublime and beautiful are derived from experience of objects. For instance, by beauty he says he means "that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it" (III, i, p. 91). Thus the passion of love may be felt as an effect of some quality experienced of an object, which may therefore be called beautiful; similarly, terror or astonishment is caused by objects with sublime qualities. In the first case the overall effect is pleasant, and in the second it is painful, or, a modification of this, delightful.

But, although there is a plausibility (not to say a tautology) in making connections in one direction - from pain, to fear, to fear-inspiring qualities, to objects in which those qualities reside, for instance - there is a basic implausibility about the reverse argument, beginning with an object and its qualities. To say an object rouses fear because it has a fearsome quality, that quality should be described independently of its capacity to rouse fear; yet if that is done there will be nothing about the description which makes it necessary that the object will in fact cause fear.

The language of cause-and-effect is just not very suitable in this case. The nature of a cause is not determined by its effect and so the cause of an emotion cannot be described as though it contained an essential quality evoking that and no other response. To include such an element in a description, furthermore, says nothing at all about the cause of the emotion except that it was appropriate to the effect.

Thus /

Thus, although it is possible to give the reason why mountains seem (to you) awe-inspiring, for example, because of their height, it is not possible to give as the cause some quality like height, for that merely leads on to the question of what is the cause of the awe-inspiring-ness of height, and so on. Once a causal chain is conjectured as an explanation of emotional effects, an indefinite argument is embarked upon, although sooner or later one runs out of qualities of qualities to cause them and is left with the bare assertion that x just is awe-inspiring or whatever.

Burke tries to work round this obstacle by introducing a physiological reaction. The qualities of objects cause a bodily reaction which in turn causes the corresponding passion, a passion the presence of which can induce the co-ordinated physical effect. The interaction of mind and body Burke sees as an opportunity to escape the vicious degeneration of the cause/effect analysis of emotion which is noted above. For it makes an opening for a thesis of biological necessity, apparent in his classification of passions into those of self-preservation, which are usually painful, and those of society, which are pleasant.

The physical presence of a threat to the system, because of the biological instinct for survival (self-preservation), causes a physiological response which communicates itself to the mind as fear; and the presence of a stimulus to reproduction causes a relaxation (!) of the system, which is identified in the mind as love. The biological imperatives, to survive and to reproduce, assumed to be necessary for the continuation of the species in its individuals, condition the human system to respond with tension or relaxation, fear or love, pain or pleasure, in the presence of objects with certain qualities.

If, therefore, the awe-inspiring quality of a mountain is its vast height and bulk, the awe-inspiring quality of vast height and bulk is, to Burke's satisfaction, the threat of annihilation which they present to lesser /

lesser, human entities; the human observer is belittled by a great mountain, he stands at its foot in a danger of extinction directly proportional (or so it seems) to the difference between his puniness and its piled-up mass. Apprehension - a particle of the mountain dislodged from its peak could in its fall eradicate a man - induces physical tension, a readiness for flight, nervous strain and hence fear, a passion of self-preservation. The fearsomeness of a mountain is for Burke a function of its potential opposition to one of his two biological absolutes, survival and reproduction.

Provided biological existence is undeniably important, survival and reproduction do assume a kind of absoluteness. To achieve these necessary ends the member of the species must have some appropriate mechanism for responding correctly to threats and to invitations to procreate. This faculty, to be truly advantageous, must be efficient, that is to say, not liable to error, which would be fatal. It is because the alternative of failure would have such drastic consequences that success appears so strongly imperative. Hence a kind of necessity seems to attach itself to the operations of the faculty responsible for ensuring survival and reproduction by co-ordinating an organic being's reactions with its environment. But although such necessity is derived not implausibly from the assumption, somewhat hidden in Burke, that existence is an unquestionable premise (for the species), it is by no means a necessity in the philosophical sense, logically or metaphysically, for after all it is possible that both individual and species might entirely cease to exist.

Burke seems to confuse the two types of necessity and convert a biological arrangement (or explanation) into a causal hypothesis. Human beings, it might be said, react with fear to threats for the reason that survival is a biological necessity; Burke translates this to mean that certain /

certain objects necessarily induce fear, that is, cause it. The reasoning seems to be this. That the need for survival should in the case of man have taken the form of a protective capacity for fear argues that there are threatening qualities in man's environment. These threats must be constant and consistent, otherwise the development of a responsiveness to them would be quite negligible, which it is not. Granting that survival is an absolute necessity, and that mankind has by and large survived, it must be conceded that the relationship between the threatening qualities of man's surroundings and his sensitivity to them must be close to perfection. Indeed, so easily and urgently does response follow stimulus that Burke sees no objection to treating them as effect and cause.

The result is to turn the existence of man into a prime value. A neutral description of something, that is, a description independent of human feelings towards the object, becomes impossible; and those feelings are in turn to be regarded as serviceable to the needs of survival and reproduction. Everything, therefore, can be measured as positive or negative towards human existence. Objects, according to Burke (and he includes other human beings), will have qualities, such as those that rouse fear, whose nature and purpose are defined in terms of the responses of human beings, which are themselves the means by which man ensures his biological continuance. In addition, Burke claims the same apparatus is involved in man's "aesthetic" pleasures, so that in his responses to art, to the sublime and beautiful, he again regards things other than himself in the light of his most basic needs.

Hence Burke's physiological explanations of the sublime and beautiful and his classification of the passions unite to form a biological theory of human nature and art. The fact that a living organism has physical and emotional reactions for its own protection and propagation, without which it (or rather its kind) would cease to exist, explains its artistic /

artistic pleasures. Burke seems simultaneously to be pressing to a conclusion the eighteenth-century admiration for "natural" values and anticipating a Darwin-like outlook.

Assuming a preference for existence over non-existence, he explains why man has passions of self-preservation and of society. He appears to say that the important features of objects for mankind are those which are the causes of the passions which ensure survival and reproduction; other features are of secondary interest. In this way the features of the environment which are naturally influential and useful in relation to human beings become the really significant ones. The point of view is not merely biological, but exclusively human as well.

It would, then, be truer to say that Burke anticipates a misunderstanding of Darwin. When the evolutionist talked of "the survival of the fittest" many took him to imply that biological success rewarded value in a species. This is far from being the case; to survive natural selection does not confer any honour, it does not make the successful species more natural than the failures. Darwin did not invest the adjective "natural" with renewed laudatory powers, by demonstrating a naive progressivist theory of history. Indeed he accomplished the reverse; an organism, in Darwin's estimation, flourishes in a biological context so specific to itself that it defies comparative judgments.

For Burke is wrong; what is biologically required is just that and no more. A "vital necessity" could be resented or denied as easily as not; there is no absolute need for any individual, any species to continue indefinitely, and so there are no biological grounds for saying some qualities in objects must have specific effects.¹ These biological considerations only gain force if the human species is regarded as intrinsically valuable and worth perpetuation. Burke's detour into biology /

¹ As John Casey says, "although suicide would, as an ethical ideal, lead to the destruction of the race, it is not therefore rendered impossible

biology does not, therefore, settle the issue of whether there must be objects with qualities which cause definite responses in humans, but it does uncover a basic assumption in his thinking and it adds to the understanding of his scientific concerns.

Credit must be given Burke for his good intentions. His Enquiry is an attempt to be scientific in an augmented, humanised sense. His experimental researches were not to lead to a geometrical conclusion of mathematical coldness, but to a warm, living conclusion, based in the needs of human existence and its griefs and joys. The theoretical background bids for scientific exactness, but the whole work is committed to the belief that the universe has qualities and values from the existence of sentient, emotional human beings, whose continuance is intrinsically worthy.

At this point one can recall Addison's contrast of science and art, understanding and imagination.¹ Addison seems very sympathetic to art and imagination, where human emotions and pleasures are more involved, but unlike Burke he does not try to reconcile art and science, for that would mean blurring the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

But if Burke wanted to humanise the sciences he also wanted to "scientificise" the humanities. His attempt at an experimental research works both ways. It implies that human values reflect the truth about the qualities of natural objects, and it asserts that human responses are directly related to observable physical fact. For every human passion, therefore, there is a corresponding object or quality of objects which can be analysed in a scientific fashion. Thus, modern science, which succeeds in describing nature by objectifying it and adopting an attitude of disinterest, could be applied to the most subjective area of human interest, to the relations of psychological states to the qualities of objects, which are conditioned overall by the extra-biological assumption of humanity's intrinsic value.

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to adopt (certain of the Manichaeans did in fact adopt it)." (Language of Criticism, London, 1966, p. 54).

¹ See above, pp. 34ff.

The origins of ideas could, then, be identified and systematically described. Theory could be applied, principles sought and human nature made the subject of laws. And here the humanising intent has an effect, for the evaluation and judgment implicit in the premise of human worth alters the character of these supposedly scientific laws. Burke's laws must not merely state, they must prescribe the positive attitude which he has adopted.

To put it bluntly, the premise that human existence is necessary and valuable renders Burke's whole psychology unscientific. For that premise is not merely unfalsifiable but beyond discussion. One either accepts it, and hence the system of responses built on it, or not. It has to be presented as absolutely true; exceptions are inconceivable. It does not therefore have the properties of a scientific statement about the world. It cannot be open to doubt, rather it must be made to seem a most inviolate truth, for from it flows all the force of Burke's argument for objects as causes of emotions.

Thus his actual example of scientific theorising needs the authoritarian and absolutist quality discernible in his philosophy of science, and needs it because he refuses to compromise his estimation of human worth. His attempt to humanise science, basing it in human needs, hence assuming the positive value of those needs, leads him to a practical demonstration of what he describes theoretically - a "science" founded on prejudice, albeit very human prejudice.

It is not altogether regrettable that Burke did not succeed. If pain and pleasure were conditioned by biological needs, they would be instinctual and almost Pavlovian in their functioning. Human beings would be reduced to dependence on insistent stimuli, like salivating dogs on dinner-bells. Burke does not seem to have been very sensitive to such an objection. Fixity of response is desirable for him, it seems. He says in /

in his "Introductory Discourse" that "my point in this inquiry is to find whether there are any principles, on which the imagination is affected, so common to all, so grounded and certain, as to supply the means of reasoning satisfactorily about them" (p.13). Satisfactory reasoning means that agreement is reached and the truth acknowledged. Such a process has, says Burke, its rules in matters of reason, though not yet in matters of taste. Yet, "it is probable that the standard both of reason and Taste is the same in all human creatures" (Introduction, p. 11); it remains only to find it out, and then settle all differences.

Remarkably, the firmness of the principles Burke desires to establish is derived from the nature of their origins, that is to say, the stability of real objects. He seeks a sure foundation for the standard of taste not in the passions of men, nor in an abstract notion of truth, but in the qualities of objects, the data of experience. It is a testimony to the prestige of experimental science that he should do so. In this respect Burke again shows a similarity to Addison (rather than to Dryden).

With principles based on empirical evidence the critic can support his judgments with appeals to his or any man's experience, for it is the virtue of the objective to be available for inspection by all. The sources of the authority of a critic's taste are thus open to investigation. Simply and straightforwardly his right to criticise can be examined and appraised, doubts and uncertainties dispelled and art and criticism grounded on the hard facts of objective experience.

Neither science nor experience is, of course, as fixed and objective as Burke hoped. The philosophy of science, for instance, is haunted by elusive, "aesthetic" requirements: a theory must be "concise" or "economy", in/

in ways not easy to grasp.¹ Burke ignores this, if he ever recognised it. For him scientific knowledge fits the world it describes more or less exactly, and he is not troubled by this happy circumstance, because on it he bases his claim for certainty and truth in human reasoning. Once again the insufficiency of his theoretical truth-conditions becomes apparent; repeated confirmation of even an observation lessens only its falsity, not its falsifiability, and hence adds little to the certainty of its being true in an infinite universe.

The fundamental weaknesses of Burke's philosophising can be further illustrated by considering the last part of the Enquiry, which deals with the subject of words and how they affect the emotions.

Burke's theory of language is a form of emotional expressionism, at least as it applies to poetry and rhetoric. Words convey passions. This conclusion is not very surprising, for without it, or something like it, Burke would be at a loss to name those passions which he says are caused by the qualities of objects. It is obviously useful to him that verbal language should be available as evidence of passion to supplement what he can collect from physical manifestations, which include gestures and facial appearances. In effect Burke puts words in the same relation as the body to the mind and its passions.

Burke points out that unlike painting or architecture words cannot affect people merely by imitating those "motions and configurations of bodies" (Part V, sec. i, p. 163) which naturally cause passions. Poetry for /

¹ See, for instance, the following:

Pierre Duhem: La Theorie Physique, Son Objet et Sa Structure, Paris, 1905, Part II, chapter vi, section 10.

Sir Karl Popper: Conjectures and Refutations, London, 1969, p. 241.

Imre Lakatos: "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes", pp. 105, 131 and 187, in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, Cambridge, 1970.

Jeremy Bernstein: Einstein, Fontana Books, 1973, p. 61.

for him is not an imitative art, for words do not resemble the things for which they stand; a proving exception to this rule is dramatic poetry, or the imitation of the verbal behaviour of men. In support of this anti-mimetic theory of language Burke attacks the notion that words raise ideas, or images, of what they represent in the minds of hearers or readers, and that these ideas or images are the meanings of the words.

Burke objects that some meanings are too complex to be imagistically represented with any ease and with the rapidity a long, involved sentence would require. Besides (and, incidentally, here is an example of Burke's enthusiasm for the experimental method), "on a very diligent examination of my own mind, and getting others to consider theirs, I do not find that once in twenty times any such picture is formed, and when it is, there is most commonly a particular effort of the imagination for that purpose" (V, iv, p.167). In addition, words are freely used before experience could provide ideas to match with them, and indeed it is the virtue of education, proceeding on this assumption, to provide, in Burke's opinion, the inexperienced with salutary preconceptions.

Exactly how words are affecting is, however, described with some difficulty by Burke, because in section ii of Part IV he attacked the theory of the association of ideas. In fact, that theory lurks very near Burke's explanation of why words are able to move the passions, although he avoids the key terms, including, of course, "idea" itself; instead he uses "habit" and "custom". Words operate "not by presenting any image to the mind, but by having from use the same effect on being mentioned, that their original has when it is seen" (V, iv, p. 167). A word is affecting because of the constancy of its conjunction with an emotion, or rather because of the conjunction with that emotion of the word's referent. Thus "descriptive poetry operates chiefly by substitution /

substitution: by the means of sounds, which by custom have the effect of realities" (V, vi, p. 173). The substitution may be less than exact, as long as the passion raised is the same. Descriptive poetry may affect the reader by rousing appropriate passions without directly referring to the objects which cause them. The business of poetry is "to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of things themselves" (V, v, p. 172). It is by the power of sympathy that words rouse emotion.

So great is the force of sympathetic emotion that it can override intellectual objections. In an illuminating passage Burke compares language to gesture:

Now, as there is a moving tone of voice, an impassioned countenance, an agitated gesture, which affect independently of the things about which they are exerted, so there are words, and certain dispositions of words, which being peculiarly devoted to passionate subjects and always used by those who are under the influence of any passion; they touch and move us more than those which far more clearly and distinctly express the subject matter. We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description. (V, vii, p. 175).

Passionate responses can be triggered off in hearers almost regardless of what is said. In addition, how something is said is an indicator of the passion felt by the speaker.

Consequently an emphasis is placed on the emotions. Words are not thought of as about emotionally neutral ideas but about passionate experiences. In expressionism what is known cannot be emotionally unfelt if it is to be communicated. Hence knowledge requires a passionate holder, a human being who feels. It is not possible, under an expressionistic theory, for something to be known and communicated apart from its context as /

as a whole experience, involving the emotions. Indeed, expressionism rapidly inclines to regarding the emotional charge as the significant factor, and the capacity for feeling as essential for communication.

For these reasons human nature comes to occupy the centre of attention, because upon it rather than on the nature of what it experiences do the form and meaning of utterances depend. The abiding feature of language and the feature therefore most amenable to systematic study, according to an expressionist theory, is its range of emotional tones, and these tones collectively define the shape of man's capacity for emotion.

Because he is required for expression, the emotionally-sentient being assumes a kind of authority; his claim that it is a fact that he has felt what he expresses cannot be dismissed unless it is decided that he has failed to be expressive. But to fail to be expressive is to fail to express some thing; to judge that such a failure has taken place some knowledge is needed of what it is (or was) that is supposed to be expressed in a particular instance. The only source of such knowledge which could be indisputable is the person who is supposed to be expressing whatever it is. His claim to expression has to be allowed at least provisionally in order to be judged.

Hence anyone can claim to be authoritative (about his own expressions), and every true expression must have authority - what it says is truly what it means. For a true source of expression, a really emotional being, authority is, logically, indispensable. This is close to saying, however, that true expressions are unfalsifiable.

Burke's attempt at a theory of language not only aims at making human emotions central to knowledge, not only makes language a source of information about, indeed evidence of, these emotions and their circumstances, but it also offers the possibility of authoritative statements, and hence the justification /

justification of authority. It is difficult, however, to see this possibility converted into actuality. Real authority would exist only if expression were successful. Expressionistic authority is an "if/then" proposition. The proposition that, if expression genuinely takes place, then it lends authority, is true (for expressionists), but it does not imply that either expression or authority exist. That existence requires an independent basis of proof. The expressionist theory of authority depends on the prior proof of the theory of expressionism. Unfortunately, such a proof would probably involve assumptions of authority, without which expression could not be said to have succeeded.

To establish conditions of authority in statements is no trivial object, certainly not in the eighteenth-century. For consider the idea-transference theory of communication Burke is opposing. It requires of its participants only the ability to have ideas and words to represent them. To possess an idea is no special achievement, and to communicate it is to make it common property; ideas are as common coin as words, and the peculiar circumstances of their getting and going are unimportant. Hence claims to authority are void, because personal point of view is irrelevant. A person cannot assert that his viewpoint is different or superior without transferring ideas to someone else; the justification of an authority would paradoxically proceed on the assumption that those to whom it was being justified had no impediment to understanding fully what claimed to be special.

All viewpoints would therefore be equivalent, and from the equivalent descriptions of a number of observers a synthesis could be made, a description of what in principle was common to the experience of all. Once this was established, further descriptions would be justified by /

by their conformity with it. Such an authority is essentially impersonal, and therefore, in a sense, not human. It transcends human limitations, although its content lacks the individuality and density of any actual human observation.

Burke's language theory, then, aims to discover grounds for authority in statements, rather as his scientific philosophy seeks grounds for authority in theory and his theory of criticism seeks grounds for authority in critical response. But he falls into similar pitfalls in all three cases. His science is composed of rigid theories whose meanings are subject to authority, not experiment; they are authoritarian rather than authoritative. His theory of the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful has embedded in it a tendentious premise, which he maintains without examination, and is designed to produce a uniformity of opinion rather than discussion or criticism. And his linguistic theory similarly restricts the role of criticism, in two ways.

Firstly, the element of associationism introduces the tendency to automatism observable in the theory of physiological responses to causal stimuli; it is not clear how the habitual connection of a word or phrase with an emotion can be broken or modified, and hence it is difficult to see how or why it should be criticised. Secondly, Burke's expressionism opens up the possibility of authoritative utterance, but again at the cost of criticism; for an authoritative expression would be beyond question, since it would completely say what it meant, so that modification would be unthinkable. An expression would be quite true and as such past debating. In respect of poetry, then, it would be ludicrous to suggest an improvement or the possibility of improvement, for then the critic would claim either to know from an inadequate expression what was meant to be said, or that some other expression was better than the one he found in the work; clearly /

clearly the poet could dismiss both claims as presumptuous.

In Burke's theory of language, then, certain fundamental assumptions are once more discernible. Human nature is once again quite central, and in particular human emotion is at the focus of attention. Another basic element is the quest for authority, an explanation of how it would be possible to justify claims made by any individual to be telling the truth. In connection with this, Burke displays a bias towards causal mechanisms and explanations which are essentially physical descriptions. Thus there is a vague but unmistakable scientific air about the whole proceedings.

The present chapter can conclude with some remarks about Burke's understanding of the word "philosophical" and about Burke's concept of criticism. The presence of the word "philosophical" in the full title of Burke's Enquiry provides the clue which has been followed here, but it leads beyond the simple equation of that word with the more modern "scientific".

From an examination of Burke's theory of experimental research and his practical enquiry into the sublime and beautiful, as well as his theory of language, it has become clear not only how Burke understood "philosophical" but also how he tried to extend it slightly in a direction which can be regarded as unscientific from the twentieth-century point of view. Thus, not only does he mean his Enquiry to be based on a theory of research involving induction from observations, but also it should provide at least the method for arriving at assured judgments and authoritative descriptions; furthermore, he does not see any inconsistency in maintaining at the same time a positive attitude to strictly human values and allowing his philosophical investigations to be directed by preconceptions which are ultimately moral.

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To consider Burke's concept of criticism, however, is to see the same range of topics from the other direction. Not only must criticism be moral and human, taking account of the passions and needs of human beings, it must also, in Burke's view, be capable of settling disputes, solving problems and justifying itself. For that it needs authority. It can gain authority, says Burke, by becoming philosophical, by being based on observations, methodical and inductive. The area where philosophy and criticism join is occupied by the concept of authority.

Burke attempts to fuse the two at that point into philosophical criticism, to the benefit of both:

If we can direct the lights we derive from such exalted speculations, upon the humbler field of the imagination, whilst we investigate the springs and trace the courses of our passions, we may not only communicate to the taste a sort of philosophical solidity, but we may reflect back on the severer sciences some of the graces and elegancies of taste, without which the greatest proficiency in those sciences will always have the appearance of something illiberal.

(Preface to the Second Edition, p.6)

What attracted Burke to science was its "solidity". He obviously felt taste and criticism lacked this. But he also felt science lacked the human qualities of grace and elegance characteristic of taste. His Enquiry is an effort to make up both these deficiencies.

CHAPTER V : LORD KAMES

The purpose of Kames's Elements of Criticism is simply to establish the authority of criticism by a "philosophical" enquiry into human nature. Kames plainly sets forth this aim in his dedication to the King, where he states that the following work "attempts to form a standard of taste, by unfolding those principles that ought to govern the taste of every individual" (p.vi).¹

When Kames published the Elements in 1762 he had already reached an eminent position in the legal system of his country. As a man of law, he would be fully aware that criticism traditionally involves passing judgments on works of art. "To censure works" he writes in his Introduction (p.14) "is the just prerogative of criticism". Because of his interest in the theory of law, he would also recognise that judging suggests the need for principles of discrimination, or laws, with which to support critical judgments. Thus, if Elements of Criticism has a more than titular resemblance to Euclid's book on geometry,² it is to a legislative Euclid.

It is upon the facts of emotion that Kames bases his justification of critical authority. He asserts that authoritative critical pronouncements can be identified by their congruence with human responses. His theory of criticism is therefore empirical. In the last analysis a critic stands by his knowledge of what human beings are really like.

Kames derives his explanation of the elements of criticism from research into human nature. His plan, he declared, was "to ascend gradually to principles, from facts and experiments; instead of beginning with the former, handled abstractedly, and descending to the latter" (p.13f).

¹ Quotations are taken from the seventh edition, "with the author's last corrections and additions", two volumes, Edinburgh, 1788.

² The "Euclidean overtones" of Kames's title are remarked on by Ian Simpson Ross in Lord Kames and the Scotland of his Day, Oxford, 1972, p. 265.

Contemporaries readily acknowledged these features of the work. The Scots Magazine declared that Kames's critical theory "will render him, in the critical art, what Bacon, Locke and Newton are in philosophy - the parent of regulated taste, the creator of metaphysical criticism, the first interpreter of our feelings and of the voice of nature, and the law-giver of capricious genius upon principles too evident to be controverted".¹

Vicesimus Knox, in an essay on "Philosophical Criticism" has this to say of Kames:

The author of the Elements of Criticism has penetrated deeply to discover the cause of those emotions which literary compositions are found to produce. He has displayed great taste, great elegance, and a subtilty of inquiry which must have resulted from laborious attention, and from a singular share of natural sagacity.²

Kames's biographer, Alexander Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, sums up, with perhaps too much emphasis on his subject's originality, the significance of Elements of Criticism thus:

In treating this subject, it was his design to proceed altogether on a new plan, and to adopt a mode of investigation different from that which had been followed by any preceding writers, either among the ancients or moderns: a design, therefore, in which, I think, he has the merit of originality, and is justly entitled to the praise of being the inventor of a science; I mean that which has been with propriety termed Philosophical Criticism.³

The stress on the philosophical or scientific aspect of Kames's critical theory refers to his foundation of it in the facts of emotion and to his method of deriving general principles from those facts experimentally observed.

¹ Scots Magazine, XXIV, 1762; quoted in William C. Lehmann: Lord Kames and the Scottish Enlightenment, The Hague, 1971, p. 228.

² Vicesimus Knox: Essays, Moral and Literary, London, 1778; quoted from the seventeenth edition, three volumes, London, 1815, volume II, p. 144.

³ Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee: Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames, two volumes, Edinburgh, 1807, volume 1, p. 272f.

The logical starting-point of Kames's criticism and of any examination of it is therefore his psychology. This point is perhaps obscured by the fact that the clearest and most helpful explanation of Kames's psychology comes at the end of the work in an appendix of "terms Defined or Explained".

Kames commences by stating that the mind has two powers or faculties, consciousness and perception (Appendix, section 2). The objects of consciousness are internal to the mind and include passion, thinking and volition (section 1); the objects of perception are external (*ibid.*) and are the qualities (for example, the colour, taste or sound) of subjects or substrata. A subject is "a being with respect to its properties or attributes" (section 4). Kames holds, however, that to perceive the qualities of a subject or substratum is to perceive the subject or substratum itself, which he frequently and confusingly calls the object. Although he therefore considers himself in opposition not only to Berkeley but also to Locke (section 14, note 1), it is obvious that he is firmly in the tradition of British empiricism, and he moves on from the division of the world into the mental and the physical, the internal and external, to a psychology of ideas.

A perceived object may, according to Kames, be recalled to mind by the memory, appearing there as it did on its original perception, only less distinctly. "This indistinct secondary perception" he writes, "of an object, is termed an idea" (section 14). On the basis of this definition he dismisses the terms "innate idea" and "general idea", for these imply the impossible notions of ideas without antecedent perceptions to be recalled by memory (section 14, note 2).

All ideas may be put into language and thus communicated to others (section 18). Visual perceptions are "more complete, lively and distinct" than /

than others, and the same is true of visual ideas compared with other ideas (section 17). Ideas can be fabricated into images which have no real existence; this is the work of imagination (section 19). Imaginary ideas seem to escape the strictures on innate and general ideas.

There are, then, three kinds of ideas: ideas of memory, derived from perceptions; ideas communicated by language; and ideas fabricated by the imagination (available only to the imaginer himself). When the last sort of ideas are communicated, they become the second kind; and when those are recalled, they become the first kind (section 20).

The idea of an object and the original perception of it differ only in distinctness. Kames makes it very clear that he considers that the responses to both are similar. This is his theory of "ideal presence", which he applies in turn to ideas of memory, and ideas of imagination:

When I recal [sic] any thing to mind in a manner so distinct as to form an idea or image of it as present, I have not words to describe that act, but that I perceive the thing as a spectator, and as existing in my presence... (Vol. 1, p.90)

A lively and accurate description of an important event, raises in me ideas no[t] less distinct than if I had been originally an eye-witness... (Vol. 1, p.92)

"In idea" he continues, "we perceive persons acting and suffering, precisely as in an original survey: if our sympathy be engaged by the former, it must also in some degree be engaged by the latter, especially if the distinctness of ideal presence approach to that of real presence" (1, p.93).

In this way Kames closely relates human responses to the real world of objects and responses to the "ideal" world of memory and imagination.

Andras /

Andras Horn is therefore fundamentally correct in saying that "the relevant question when analysing his work is not 'What should, according to Kames, literature be like ?' but rather 'What are we like ?' or more precisely 'What is it in man that makes a given phenomenon aesthetically pleasing ?'"¹ But the use of the word "aesthetically" is a mistake; there is no suggestion in Kames of a specifically aesthetical emotion.

So far, however, the separate perceptions and ideas are not unified or amalgamated into structures or a whole by Kames' psychological principles. He does talk loosely of the mind, which is both conscious and perceiving and so contains the operations of memory, imagination and so on. He also refers to the existence of the self, knowledge of which is due in the individual neither to consciousness nor to perception but to a mysterious, anonymous third faculty, which is neither internal nor external (Appendix, section 3). But in addition to the self there is another, more important attempt at a cohesive factor.

The first chapter of the Elements contains a thesis of Kames' psychology not yet mentioned here - the theory of perceptions and ideas in a train, or association. Both objects and ideas, says Kames, easily succeed one another in trains of thought, formed on consistent principles of relation. "Cause and effect, contiguity in time or in place, high and low, prior and posterior, resemblance, contrast, and a thousand other relations, connect things together without end" (Vol.1, p.18). Observable among objects, these relations are also observable among ideas. It follows, then, that a relation conceived of as subsisting among real objects is analogous to what must pertain to equivalent ideas, so that those relations shape the mind's trains of thought. Furthermore, the mind takes pleasure in the orderliness of its ideas and the consistency of their relations with those of perceived objects. Hence a series of imagined ideas /

¹ Andras Horn: "Lord Kames and the Anthropological Approach to Criticism" in Philological Quarterly, XIIIV, 1965, p.211.

ideas is bound to please when it conforms to the principles of order of real objects, or our ideas of them:

Every work of art that is conformable to the natural course of our ideas, is so far agreeable; and every work of art that reverses that course, is so far disagreeable. (I, p.27)

The pleasure of imaginative constructions, therefore, can be explained in terms of the connections among their constituent ideas, provided that those connections are in accordance with the supposed principles of connection of real objects. Thus the general principles of the fine arts are identified by Kames with the relations observed among associated ideas and objects. The theory of association of ideas not only gives Kames a general licence to relate ideas or mental states with other, "associated" ones to form structures, but also the opportunity to extend the systematics of description of objects by analogy to the description of ideas, and, in particular, to the series of imaginary ideas which constitute the fine arts. A large part of the Elements is devoted to exploring this line of approach in order to prove that the associational relationships are the principles of taste.

There is nothing in Kames to make the theory of association of ideas coherent with the rest of his psychology. The problem of Kames's kind of epistemology is that it deals in discrete entities of experience which have to be articulated into series in order not only to make thought a possibility but also to make it arise out of perception. But because Kames is reluctant to postulate a faculty which invariably takes perceptions or ideas and performs operations on them, thus creating a thinking process, he seeks to make the parts of trains of thought themselves the causes of their own association. The principle of association, then, not only requires that there be things to be associated, non-reducible particles, not further analysable, from which larger series are built up and which therefore have to /

to be linked, but also, in the form Kames gives it, an impulse to associate, a propensity in those same particles to overcome their own separateness, deny their discreteness and form quasi-causal chains. In addition, they form such relationships on principles which are not themselves directly perceptible, but can only be inferred from the trains of thought which occur.

The basic difficulty is at least as old as Greek philosophy. Atomistic theories assert that what exists is composed of discrete entities. This entails some separation between atom and atom. If atoms are all that exist, then they are separated by non-existence or the void, across which communication of influences atom to atom is impossible. Since there is no contact between atoms, each is absolutely isolated, and to talk of relations or groupings among atoms is absurd.

A theory which on the contrary speaks of the continuity or flux of all things, however, entails another logical difficulty. Strictly speaking, such a continuum cannot cover more than one entity, that is to say, the whole universe. A continualist theory is incompatible with talk of separate particles.

It is obvious that pure atomism and pure continualism are both unwieldy doctrines when deployed as explanations of physical nature. In practice, atomists tend to violate the discreteness of their fundamental particles, and talk of them as if they are related to each other, and continualists similarly abandon the proposition that all things are in flux in order to single out objects for attention. Both come to occupy roughly the same middle ground, but for antithetical reasons.

The theory of ideas is, of course, basically atomistic. One idea is distinguishable from another; ideas are not thought of as melting into each other so that they lose their separate identities. The eighteenth-century /

eighteenth-century psychology of ideas begins with statements about the discreteness of ideas. But it cannot proceed for long before it comes on the difficulty of making relations between ideas possible. The favourite method became the theory of the association of ideas.

Such psychological atomism was influenced by the physical atomism of the science of the day. Newton had stated this unequivocally in his Opticks:¹

All these things being consider'd, it seems probable to me, that
God in the Beginning form'd Matter in solid, massy, hard,
impenetrable, moveable Particles...

The corollary of this is that the spaces between such particles are immaterial. It follows that influences atom to atom, matter to matter across such void spaces operate immaterially, or not at all. Thoroughgoing materialism thus entails a no less thorough immaterialism.

Newton was embarrassed by this consequence and was therefore reluctant to speculate about the nature of the force between material particles with which his name is most associated - gravity. "The Cause of Gravity" he wrote to Richard Bentley on 17 January, 1692/3, "is what I do not pretend to know".² But it was on this very point he was severely criticised and accused of re-introducing "occult" powers into physics, in the shape of action at a distance.

The effort to explain the dispositions and mutual relations of bodies in space inevitably led to the theory of a power operating among them and in the void. This power was essentially unlike the matter from which /

¹ Opticks, Book III, part 1, Query 31. In the edition of I. Bernard Cohen, New York, 1952, page 402.

² See I. Bernard Cohen and Robert E. Schofield: Isaac Newton's Papers and Letters on Natural Philosophy. Cambridge, 1958, p.298

which it emanated and which it influenced. The power of association is similar.¹ Indeed, Hume explicitly compares them. He says of the association of ideas that "here is a kind of ATTRACTION, which in the mental world will be found to have as extraordinary effects as in the natural, and to shew itself in as many and as various forms".² And Hume, like Newton, hesitates to speculate about the cause of the power of "attraction". "Its effects are every where conspicuous; but as to its causes, they are mostly unknown, and must be resolv'd into original qualities of human nature, which I pretend not to explain".²

Newton's mechanics and eighteenth-century psychology such as Kames presents shared, as Hume perceived, the logical structure of a modified atomism. In Elements of Criticism this pattern of thought dominates Kames's theories at various levels of the discussion of taste and criticism - not only at the level of individual psychology, but also at the level of criticism as a public expression of individual responses.

When he has laid the foundations of his system in the theory of ideas and the theory of association, Kames is prepared for two tasks. An outline of this programme is given at the beginning of Chapter 3:

Having discoursed in general of emotions and passions, I proceed to a more narrow inspection of such of them as serve to unfold the principles of the fine arts...instead of a painful and tedious examination of the several passions and emotions, I purpose to confine my inquiries to such attributes, relations, and circumstances, as in the fine arts are chiefly employed to raise agreeable emotions.

Attributes /

¹ That association is like gravity is suggested by the absence in both cases of a repulsive counter-force. Unlike electricity and magnetism, gravity seems only to act by attraction.

² A Treatise of Human Nature, Book I, Part I, Section iv.

Attributes of single objects, as the most simple, shall take the lead; to be followed with particulars, which, depending on relations, are not found in single objects. Despatching next some coincident matters, I proceed to my chief aim, which is, to establish practical rules for the fine arts, derived from principles previously established.

(I, pp. 195f.)

The attributes of "single objects" Kames discusses are: beauty; grandeur and sublimity; motion and force; novelty and the unexpected; the risible. Each takes one chapter.

He then goes on to the agreeable relations between (or among) objects: resemblance and dissimilitude; uniformity and variety; congruity and propriety; dignity and grace; ridicule; wit; and custom and habit. Although the detail Kames enters into rather obscures the purpose of this part of the book, he does attempt to refer back as often as possible to the principles of association of ideas, cause and effect, resemblance, contrast and so on.

In general, he begins a chapter by clarifying what he means by its title and then he analyses that subject into subordinate parts. He then considers each part and its emotional effect, or what relation of ideas it contains. Basically, his method is to redescribe events and circumstances to arrive at a terminology which allows a plausible transference into psychological terms. The repeated divisions of the principal subject give the impression of a reduction to more and more elementary parts. To prevent this leading to a regression into ever more subordinate classes of attributes and agreeable emotions, Kames is capable, for instance, of claiming that "to inquire why an object, by means of the particulars mentioned regularity, uniformity, proportion, order and simplicity appears beautiful, would, I am afraid, be a vain attempt: it seems the most probable /

probable opinion, that the nature of man was originally formed with a relish for them, in order to answer wise and good purposes" (I, p.201).

Such a line of argument is similar to that which Burke seeks to avoid.¹ When Burke tries to explain the effect of the sublime, he tries not to have to make a stand on a claim that some quality in objects just simply is awe-inspiring, and instead suggests a basis of biological necessity to human reactions. Kames, however, does not present anything equivalent to the concepts of self-preservation and propagation Burke uses to try to explain why objects are disagreeable or not.

Kames, however, shows a similarity to Burke in his attitude to language, which is the substance of the "coincident matters" he refers to at the beginning of his third chapter. What he tries to show in the first chapter of this section of his book, "External Signs of Emotions and Passions," is that "internal objects" (passion, thinking, volition and so on) have perceptible effects which are sure indications of their natures:

So intimately connected are the soul and body, that every agitation in the former produceth a visible effect upon the latter. There is, at the same time, a wonderful uniformity in that operation; each class of emotions and passions being invariably attended with an external appearance peculiar to itself. These external appearances or signs may not improperly be considered as a natural language, expressing to all beholders emotions and passions as they arise in the heart.

(I, p.426)

Kames tactic here is to convert appearances into signs; the first may or may not be meaningful, the second usually are. Thus there may or may not be a language of appearances, but there is generally a language of signs. Of course, a sign-language is atomistic. The meaning of a sign is established by reference to that which it signals, just as the meaning of an /

¹ See above, pp. 57ff.

an idea in Kames's psychology is secured by reference to a perception of an object, in most cases. If what is signalled is not individually distinguished, the sign will be ambiguous. The different signs must be apportioned as nearly as possible to single meanings for the sake of clarity. The syntax of a sign-language, how the various signs and their meanings relate to each other, is a problem Kames does not attempt to solve.

If the external appearances of emotions and passions are in fact signs of those agitations of the soul, one only needs to know what the signs stand for to understand the language, and thus be capable of telling how some-one feels from the expressions he uses. According to Kames, "man is provided by nature with a sense or faculty that lays open to him every passion by means of its external expressions" (I, p.441), and so the language of appearances is readable to him. This new, intuitive (the word is Kames's) faculty is an oddity, lifting the understanding of language out of the realms of both perception and association, not to mention reason.

Kames, nevertheless, is satisfied that just as ideas, which are "internal", are related to objects, which are "external", words and gestures, which are "external", are related to the "internal" ideas. Language, including verbal language, thus becomes a medium through which to view the mind.

There is, however, something in Kames' scheme between mental states and the language related to them. "Every thought prompted by passion", he writes, "is termed a sentiment" (I, p.457). Kames seems to mean that verbal statements are a combination of thought-content and emotional charge. The particular consistency of the combinations of thought and emotion in a person's utterances gives the characteristics of his mind; to create fictional characters a similar consistency must be caught. For Kames, character means emotional character.

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The chapter, "Language of Passion", completes the intermediary section of Kames's work. In it he makes clear his extension of the expressive power of language not just to what is said but to how it is said, too. Indeed, the stress falls so heavily on the latter that it begins to seem that formal properties are the more significant bearers of the emotional charge in which Kames is so interested. In this he anticipates the next task in hand, the application of his principles to the ideas of imagination, the fine arts themselves.

Most of the second half of Elements of Criticism is devoted to this second task. Enough has already been said of Kames's intentions to suggest what kind of statements he makes about narration and description, epic and dramatic compositions, the three unities, gardening and architecture. Except for the two last subjects, his attention is almost exclusively confined to the literary and dramatic. Generally, Kames takes traditional formulae, from such authorities as Horace and Vida, and re-describes them in emotional expressionist terms.

Perhaps the most remarkable chapters in this section of the book are the earlier ones, on comparison and figures, including simile, metaphor, allegory, personification, apostrophe, hyperbole and a mixed group which seems to contain synecdoche, metonymy, and transferred epithets and some more. Kames himself says he was inclined to ignore this material "till discovering, by a sort of accident, that many of them depend on principles formerly explained, I gladly embraced the opportunity to show the influence of these principles where it would be the least expected" (Vol. II, p.227). Kames's procedure is first to describe the figures, using terms much discussed formerly, and then suggest conditions for their use, in the context of a more or less naturalistic drama, on the grounds of emotional veracity.

It /

It is interesting that Kames should fall back so readily on so much traditional material. It suggests an affinity between the rules of ancient criticism and rhetoric and Kames's principles. The difference between them is that the latter are supposed to be derived from study of human nature. Their uses, however, as precepts by which to judge works of art, are very much alike. It appears that Kames uses his "philosophical" approach in these instances to renew the authority of traditional critical doctrines.

The authority of the critic is, of course, made precarious by Kames's atomistic psychology of ideas and its consequence, an atomistic view of society. If the contents of the mind are ideas derived either from experience or imagination, then any individual's thinking will be conditioned by his experience and his own fancy. These are not necessarily free from particularity. Indeed, one would expect that any individual would have different memories from others.

It might be supposed that such idiosyncrasies could easily be observed, and therefore neutralised, because the external signs of passion and emotion, that is, language, would reveal them. But Kames confesses that the interpretation of words is not as easy as he might seem to suggest. Only words referring to objects of "external sense" can be unambiguously interpreted. Those referring to passion are less certain in their meanings, and "words signifying internal action and the more delicate feelings, are less distinct". (I, p.443). Hence, says Kames, the difficulty of logic, the science of internal action, although he believes logic has been much advanced by Locke. He immediately continues:

The same defect is remarkable in criticism, which has for its object the more delicate feelings; the terms that denote these feelings being not more distinct than those of logic. To reduce the science of criticism to any regular form, has never once been attempted: however /

however rich the ore may be, no critical chemist has been found, to analyse its constituent parts, and to distinguish each by its own name. (I, p.443)

The implicit comparisons Kames makes here between himself and Locke and himself and an analytic chemist are incidentally illuminating of his philosophical purpose. More significant, however, is his opinion that criticism is the difficult business of arriving at regular principles of the more delicate feelings. In so doing, the critic has not the advantage that the words used to express such feelings are unambiguous.

It follows that any particular critic must have doubts whether his feelings are quite in accord with those of others. He has to be extremely adept at reading the signs of other people's feelings before he can conclude that what he experiences is roughly the same. He ought therefore to hesitate before making a general pronouncement on his own experience, for what is true for him may not be so for others. The authority of any general principles of taste he arrives at need not necessarily hold for anyone but himself.

In trying to avoid these difficulties and establish the authority of the critic, Kames makes two major assumptions. The first is, of course, that the fine arts affect human beings largely by means of the emotions. Emotion here, as so often, is contrasted with the understanding. Historically speaking, the first attempt by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, among others, to find a method for identifying authoritative statements had been based on the understanding, or rather on its method of operation, reason.

Briefly, it was felt that the logical consistency of a group of statements was a sign of their veracity, and that the detection of illogicality and incoherency among statements destroyed their claim to truth. These opinions were fostered by the growing importance of mathematics. But though the /

the second suggestion is useful both are doubtful, because they confuse validity with veracity; that is to say, conformity of a system of propositions with rules of right reasoning, or logic, does not entail conformity with existence and hence lend authority. Nevertheless, this debate at least served to clarify the requirements for authoritative statements. What was needed was some way of judging the certainty of the content. Interest shifted from the relationships among statements to the question of what they were about. Authority then became a matter of truthful responses.

For its new, responsive role the understanding was fitted out with sense-apparatus and memory and given language to report its findings. But its power of reason proved a troublesome associate. There was a real danger of its intervening too much between the first sensation and the subsequent report of it, with questionable effects on the authority of that report. Indeed, since veracity required no further operations or deductions to be made by the mind afterwards, so that reason was an unnecessary stage, a superfluous opportunity for introducing errors. By the eighteenth century, therefore, philosophers were anxious to derive authoritative statements from truthful responses in the most straightforward manner. What they wanted was a system of direct, even automatic, responses, of a high degree of consistency, readily expressed and hence readily observed; these they found in the emotions.

Thus emotional response became the scheme of veracious response and the basis for authority. Not only were emotions free of the inadmissible confusion of validity and veracity which had proved so fatal to the authority of reason, but they seemed in a happy manner to be both valid and true at the same time. If a man responded emotionally to something, it was certainly true that he did so, and if he had managed to respond then such a response /

response was permissible and hence valid; he could not be told he ought to have responded differently, that it was impossible to respond except in a specific fashion, if in fact he had not done so. In the case of emotion, then, a man was in a position to speak with authority, it seemed.

At this point, however, a curious difficulty arises, which also faces Burke's expressionist theories.¹ If a man feels as he feels, then he can with authority announce the fact, and others can repeat his statement on his authority. But what else can be said on this authority? Practically nothing at all. Thus, whereas reason had proved useful in establishing sure relations among statements, but inadequate to establishing the authority of simple statements, the emotions certainly provided a means of authorising simple statements, but no authority for relating them together. An emotional response might head a chain of deductive reasoning, but it could not make those deductions veracious, authorised, unless they were themselves emotional responses, which seems a little strained.

Now the unassailable veracity of emotions becomes an embarrassment, for it makes discrimination among them, and hence standards of judgment, impossible. The result is a universe of atomistic statements, all veracious, all possessing authority, all restricted in scope, all limited in time, place and person.

Kames' second assumption is a direct attempt to overcome this fragmentation of viewpoint. In order that the authority of statements based on emotions should not be restricted to the person who has the emotion, which would mean no public criteria of truth, Kames assumes that human nature is by and large uniform. What one person feels under given conditions, any other normal person should feel under similar conditions; and since everyone can know his own nature, anyone can learn about human nature in general. It follows that Kames is as well placed as anyone to know the truth about human nature. In addition, all that he says will be readily recognised by other human beings.

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¹ See above, pp. 68ff.

It is true that this reduces his statements to commonplaces; indeed if pressed vigorously, it lifts his comments out of the realms of disagreement and debate. Hence the theory of the uniformity of human nature (incidentally, a basically continualist notion), although it circumvents the problem raised by Kames's first assumption, which tends to limit authority in proportion to the limits of individual experience, does not escape a second objection, that authoritative statements require a privileged position in order to be interesting and informative.

In practice, of course, Kames does claim some advantage from his personal stance even in reviewing what he says is universal human experience. He does this by allowing for superficial differences among human beings, and, when that fails, by re-defining human nature in terms of potentialities, not always realised in every human; but now he has to assume both his own competence in recognising the really fundamental and significant features, and his own success in realising his full human nature. His authority, then, remains suspect despite his claim to participate in universal humanity.

Kames's two assumptions do not combine very well. The atomistic tendency of emotional expressionism is overridden in a crude fashion by the theory of the uniformity of human nature. This brings to mind the relation between ideas and the association of ideas, according to which ideas have an inherent tendency to attract and displace one another in a fortuitous renunciation of self-sufficiency. Both in individual psychology and in social psychology, Kames finds himself faced with the problem of explaining how discrete entities relate to each other.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the book, "Standard of Taste", it becomes obvious how intractable his problem is. Fittingly, this chapter comes at the end, for in it the question of judgment, and therefore of authority, is specifically confronted.

Boldly /

Boldly Kames begins the chapter facing the argument that there is no disputing about taste - an argument which is based on the atomistic assumption that the relative differences among men make comparisons and generalisations impossible. In three concise paragraphs Kames sets out the argument for this point of view, and cogently sums it up:

...doth it not seem whimsical, and perhaps absurd, to assert, that a man ought not to be pleased when he is, or that he ought to be pleased when he is not? (II, p.488)

But although Kames admits this opinion is perplexing, he denies its conviction. For it seems to him that the very fact that men do talk of good and bad taste and pass judgments on each other in this respect must, because it is so widespread, have a solid basis of justification: "what is universal, must have a foundation in nature" (p. 490). The problem, again, is to discover on what authority judgments are made.

Kames puts forward once again his grand assumption - the uniformity of human nature, which now assumes an evaluative role. It is because men believe this assumption that they expect agreement in their own opinions and find abhorrent any gross deviations:

A man who, avoiding objects generally agreeable, delights in objects generally disagreeable, is condemned as a monster: we disapprove his taste as bad or wrong, because we have a clear conception that he deviates from the common standard. (II, p.492)

From this it appears that the standard of taste is based on agreed descriptions of objects. Having established from various individuals what their reactions in any instance are, the critic must collate the evidence and arrive at a description, containing all the common elements, such that it accounts, by and large, for the actual responses on which he based his findings, and suggests what is likely to be the apt response of any new observer.

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The consensus, then, is the standard of taste. Authority is sought by an appeal to the common view of mankind. A mere difference of opinion is not critical except in so far as one or other party claims to represent the general opinion of mankind; "my disgust is raised" says Kames, "not by differing from me, but by differing from what I judge to be the common standard" (p.494). Disputes are settled, presumably, by canvassing opinions and counting possible votes. Kames himself uses this metaphor, for on page 499 he writes that "in gathering the common sense of mankind...a wary choice is necessary, for to collect votes indifferently would certainly mislead us".

The political parallel is worth exploring. Essentially the problem is that to establish what, in any case, is acceptable all those qualified must state their opinions so that a majority decision can be achieved; those in the minority will then stand condemned, and will therefore change their minds. It is the last point that makes this scheme differ from an election in, say, the British political system, because there the defeated party is not obliged to fall in with their opponents. This is only the case where numerical superiority bestows not only power but also rectitude, where might and right are identified, or where what is normal is regarded as mandatory. Kames's attitude to the standard of taste is much like this; an equivalent political view can be found in Rousseau.

In order to justify the power of government (the state), Rousseau said it had to be grounded in the wishes of its subjects (Social Contract, Book II, chapter i) - not their individual whims, but their communal hopes, what they thought best for their society: this he called the general will (ibid., II,iii). Once the general will was established, opposition had to cease or become criminal, because by definition it was inimical to the state as expression of the general will of (all) the citizens (ibid., I, vii). Rousseau evidently assumed the undesirability of continuous debate about political ends.

Egalitarianism /

Egalitarianism is a foundation of his system (ibid., II,xi; IV,ii), just as the uniformity of human nature is of Kames's. Rousseau has therefore to allow each citizen an equal say in the formation of the general will. The right to vote is inalienable. The individuals in Rousseau's system are therefore like atomic particles. He tended to assume that under certain conditions the citizens would, by deciding freely, automatically coincide in articulating their sense of what common influences they felt and what common action they ought to take. Rousseau's difficulties were how the general will could be expressed and acknowledged, and how it could be justified. Kames's difficulties are similar - the likelihood of unanimous verdicts on works of art, the expression of such unanimity and the recognition of it.

The state, says Rousseau, will have an absolute right to dispose of its subjects if it acts in accordance with the general will (Social Contract, I,vii); the critic, says Kames, will act with similar justice if he praises and blames in conformity with the standard of taste. At this point practical difficulties emerge, because of the difficulty of reaching agreement where self-interest is concerned.

The general will is not the possession of any individual, nor is its interpretation his alone; yet any person who tries to judge with state authority implicitly claims not just acquaintance with it but also an understanding of its meaning and consequences. How can such claims to competence be themselves judged without making similar claims in so doing? Kames, after all, does not say his disgust is raised "by differing from[...] the common standard", but "by differing from what I judge to be the common standard". Kames solves the problem of justifying his particular critical opinions only by pushing the difficulty of justification back to the more general question of the authority of his judgments concerning what the standard of taste is.

For /

For Rousseau, this kind of objection is devastating. He shows how the authority of the state ought to be justified by the general will, but he is therefore unable to show how it could be so justified in practice, since no man or group of men less than the whole (and sometimes not even them, if they remain self-interested) is in a position to claim the authority of the general will. The same might be said of Kames; he shows how a standard of taste ought to be made authoritative, but how could such a project be realised?

To speak with authority has become to speak from no single point of view at all; but no human individual can be reasonably said to fulfil that condition, and no other entity exists to do the talking. Every person, merely by being an individual, limited in experience and confined to his own point of view, is disqualified from voicing the critical consensus. In founding the standard of taste on basic human nature, generally uniform and universally general, Kames in fact makes the ineluctible particularity of individual human beings a telling objection to the actualisation of such a standard. It is a fine example of the logical difficulty of atomism.

Kames' solution to this problem is extremely simple. He insists from the very beginning on a cause and effect relationship between objects (or qualities) and emotions:

It is a fact universally admitted, that no emotion or passion ever starts up in the mind without a cause...

(Chapter 2, part I: "Causes unfolded of the Emotions and Passions", volume I, page 35)

It follows that an empirical investigation of what causes the various pleasures of taste will reveal general principles of criticism which may be taken as standard.

By the principles that constitute the sensitive [sic] part of our nature, a wonderful uniformity is preserved in the emotions and feelings of the different races of men; the same object making upon every person the same impression, the same in kind, if not in degree. (Vol. II, p. 503)

These principles provide an independent and objective means of verifying the consensus. Unlike Rousseau, Kames can by-pass the electoral process and merely from consideration of the object arrive at an understanding of what the opinion of the majority ought to be:

As the taste of every individual ought to be governed by the principles above mentioned, an appeal to these principles must necessarily be decisive of every controversy that can arise upon matters of taste. (II, p. 503f.)

Kames, in other words, claims that a scientific investigation of human nature will lead to the discovery of the principles of the effect of objects on the emotions. These principles will in fact coincide with the standard of taste, but, because they are generalised from experiments, from empirical facts about human nature, and are not merely the personal reactions of the critic, they will escape the charge of bias or limitation of viewpoint.

Kames's philosophical criticism will therefore be based on principles derived from synthetic descriptions of objects in which all the qualities which commonly cause certain emotional reactions are specified, along with notes on their effects. Once such a description is established in any particular case, the response to the object will be fixed. By appealing to a description so established, or to the principles employed in establishing it, a critic can justify his account of the work as normal or standard, and legitimately require others to conform. His argument will be that anyone reacting to this particular object must be affected in the same way if he is human at all. Anyone who feels differently must admit his mistake and conform to the majority opinion, the standard of taste.

By making emotions the effects of qualities, Kames virtually asserts the insignificance of personal viewpoint in responses to works of art. Obviously, as long as the qualities are free to cause their associated emotion /

emotion, no normal individuals, no matter how apparently different, can fail to feel the same effect. But this is not only in conflict with the belief that emotions, and perceptions, pertain to distinguishable individuals, but also with the fact that these individuals do in fact differ in their opinions.

If emotions are caused, then a difference of critical opinion means not only a difference of emotions, but one of causes, too. Where causes differ, effects are not just incompatible, they are incomparable. Two disputing critics would not be talking about the same object if their emotions differed. Thus there is no disputing about taste.

The authority Kames appeals to in criticism is the fixity of emotional responses. But that authority is the justification of nothing more helpful than the argument that there is no disputing about taste. Kames himself removes the possibility of avoiding this conclusion.

The irony of this is that it is a result of Kames's attempt to be "philosophical". It is because he takes emotional responses to objects as the data of his criticism and takes them as fixed entities that he is logically unable to account for the fluidity of actual experiences of art. He looks about for a sure foundation of authority. He turns to empirical experience as such a basis. In doing so he assumes that objects have a fixity and permanence so that perceptions of them can be constantly renewed and rejustified. His assumptions that human beings respond emotionally in more or less the same way to repeated stimuli and that all human beings share more or less the same emotional nature are only subsequent to his assumption that there is a universe of objects whose natures are sufficiently stable to provide repeated stimuli to human sensory organs.

Such a world is the one which it is the aim of scientific research to describe. But Kames makes the stimuli of human responses the causes of /

of those responses, so that it is impossible for a human being to vary or improve his comprehension of the universe. The result is inimical to both science and criticism.

In fact, Kames misjudged the success of natural philosophy, so impressive in his day. The achievement of seventeenth-century science was not its positive additions to knowledge, great though these were, but the institution of a dynamic period of thought, in which change, innovation and the effort to improve and develop were at first acceptable and later praiseworthy. Again ironically, Kames himself is consciously an innovator and a reformer, yet the change he seeks is in the direction of stability and authority.

CHAPTER VI : GERARD

It is necessary to preface any comment on Gerard's Essay on Taste with some notes on the history of the work. According to an "Advertisement", dated 28 September, 1758, in the first edition (p.i),¹ and retained in the third (p.vii),² the original impulse to write the book came from a competition sponsored by the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture in 1756. But what Gerard submitted to the Society, thus winning the medal for the best essay on taste, was merely the "general principles" (ibid.) of his enquiry, not the whole. After the prize was won, he was "encouraged to offer the whole, as it was at first composed, to the public" (ibid.). This suggests that the first edition of the Essay (1759) was substantially completed in or before 1756, and that it reached its published form after some revision by the author. It could be argued, indeed, that Gerard continued to touch up his Essay for the next twenty years or so.

The second edition (1764), however, seems to have been substantially the same as the first (v. Hipple, p.xxi), but with the third in 1780 major additions were made, in particular the whole of Part IV, "Of the Standard of Taste". "There is every reason to think" writes Hipple, in his Introduction to the facsimile of the third edition (p.xxii), "that the line of thought, and perhaps even much of the composition, of these additions had /

¹ An Essay on Taste, London, 1759 (facsimile, Scholar press, Menston, Yorkshire, 1971).

² An Essay on Taste, Edinburgh, 1780 (facsimile, ed. Walter J. Hipple, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, Gainesville, Florida, 1963)

had been worked out years before at the time of discussions in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society". His source of information seems to be The Scottish Philosophy, (London, 1875) by James McCosh, who, in an appendix, notes that the standard of taste was discussed by the Aberdeen Society, probably in 1758, and that the question of poetry as imitation (the subject of Gerard's appendix to his third edition) was raised in 1768.

In addition, Gerard's Essay on Genius, which is related to the Essay on Taste, especially Part III, section ii, although probably begun before 1758, was not published until 1774. It is also relevant to note that Hume's essay "On the Standard of Taste" appeared in 1757; too late to affect the first edition of Gerard's Essay, it strongly influenced the additional Part IV of the third edition, and may perhaps have spurred Gerard on to a greater exertion in a direction he had held back from in his original version.

The important question is whether the additional material of the third edition, especially Part IV, "Of the Standard of Taste", is mere padding or a legitimate expansion of Gerard's thesis. The external evidence reviewed above is inconclusive. One could regard the addition of a discussion of the standard of taste as merely opportunist, as a genuine development of Gerard's thinking, or even as the re-instatement of material omitted in 1758-9, for reasons of brevity or such like. In the first case discontinuities in the third edition would be stressed; in the second case, continuities; and in the last the twenty year gap between the first and third editions would be virtually ignored.

Because /

Because the work is, after all, only an essay, it may be that Gerard set eloquence, smoothness of diction and ease of reading before minute logical accuracy; he may have felt that it was more important to present his ideas on the subject of taste, however sketchy and inconsistent, rather than labour to make them coherent. On the other hand, no essayist, however informal, would startle his readers by presenting obvious contradictions and introducing total irrelevancies. Nevertheless, the style of an essay is not necessarily that of a philosophical treatise, although, of course, it may be.

Given therefore that Gerard's work need not be rigorously systematic, the treatment of internal evidence of self-consistency in the third edition is inconclusive and strongly influenced by one's attitude to the external evidence of dates and discussions.

The claim that the standard of taste is a central topic in Gerard's Essay is therefore rather weak. On the other hand, the arguments against this claim are not themselves very firmly grounded. The dilemma is sharpened by the recognition that some of the best of Gerard's work is in these additions of 1780. The charitable student will surely want to argue that this material is the fulfilment of Gerard's earlier speculations, and that therefore the third edition of the Essay is structurally as well as materially superior to its predecessors. The present writer intends to be charitable to Gerard in this respect. It follows that the work discussed here is the third edition of 1780.

The /

The structure of Gerard's Essay is not, however, altogether clear. After a short introduction, Part I deals quite simply with various aspects of taste as a form of sensation; Part II goes on to consider the nature and development of individual taste. But in Part III various topics are dealt with, some, like the relation between taste and the imagination, very closely connected with what has been covered in Parts I and II, others less so. In Part IV Gerard discusses the nature and development of the taste of individuals in a community.

From this a pattern emerges. The key concept is, of course, taste. Gerard considers it first as a psychological concept, and relates it in a complex theory of mind with the senses, the imagination and the judgment. In part as a consequence of this he goes on to treat of taste in two aspects - the private or individual, and the public or communal. In both cases he wants to trace the development of taste, how the mind perfects the faculty of response, and how the community develops its attitudes to those responses. He is certainly aware of the interrelation of these developments, but, having begun with what is in effect an excursion into epistemology, where idiosyncratic differences are philosophically ignored, when it comes to examining the business of criticism in public and the major fact of variety of opinions, Gerard is unable to avoid a conflict between private and public taste. He never solves the fundamental problem of aligning the two, partly because the discrepancy is so deeply implicit in the premises of his theory of taste. This also means that the difficulty arises over and over again for Gerard. The Essay therefore appears generally to be a dissatisfied worrying at the same topic.

In the background of Gerard's discussion is the problem of relativity. Gerard concedes a high degree of autonomy to the critical judgments /

judgments of individuals. He accepts that they vary greatly in time and space. He is not willing to concede that such variety can legitimately be ended by authoritarian assertion. The reconciliation of differing opinions must, he believes, be made on the basis of general principles of taste. It is to these he appeals as the source of authority in criticism. The general principles are the standard of taste by which to evaluate the initially equivalent critical reactions of individuals. Although Gerard is impressed by the variety of taste, he is convinced that such variety is not absolutely random, but can be accounted for and explained. The way to reach such explanations is, in Gerard's opinion, by scientific, or "philosophical", investigation of taste.

His Essay, therefore, has a great similarity in principle with Kames's Elements. It also adopts the empiricist attitude recommended by Addison, and, furthermore, Gerard, like Burke, pays some attention to the theoretical side of natural philosophy.

Taste, as Gerard defines it in his "Introduction," consists chiefly in the improvement of those principles which are commonly called the powers of imagination" (p.1). These powers he in turn defines as "internal or reflex senses" (ibid.), which are less gross than "our external organs" (p.2), and involve a further act of mind than mere perception, that is, some reflection on a "circumstance or mode of the object that was perceived, besides those qualities which offered themselves to its [the mind's] attention at first view" (p.2, note). The concept is clarified by an example; the sense or taste of novelty cannot be enjoyed until the mind has reflected that the object it now perceives has not been perceived on any former occasion.

Unfortunately, Gerard is not so explicit about the acts of reflection associated with the other principles of taste - sublimity, beauty, imitation, harmony, ridicule and virtue, "a taste of a superior order" (p. 69). In most /

most of these cases it is not difficult to speculate, by analogy with the given example of novelty, what the reflex act might be; for instance, enjoyment of imitation surely involves an act of mental comparison. Sublimity and beauty, however, two leading principles in the theory of taste, at least for the eighteenth century, do not seem readily accounted for as reflex senses. And the twentieth-century reader may be surprised to find virtue classed as any kind of a sense, although immediate perception of this "quality" is a common eighteenth-century thesis.

The internal senses, says Gerard, have a mutual influence on each other. The action of one is strengthened by the simultaneous action of others. It follows that "all of them must at once be vigorous, in order to constitute taste in its just extent" (p.73). Strangely, the exercise of a fully developed set of the principles of taste is distinct from delicacy of passion or sensibility. "Delicacy of passion must be united with vigorous internal senses, in order to give taste its just extent" (p.82). There seems to be a difference between sentiments of taste and ordinary emotions. Gerard hesitates over allowing the pleasures of the imagination to be assimilated to pleasure in general.

To understand this hesitation one must consider Gerard's attitude to the imagination. Although he says he does not believe the imagination is irregular (p. 212), he is very nervous about its reputed unruliness (v.p.162). Why this is so may be inferred from the Appendix "Concerning the Question, Whether Poetry be properly an Imitative Art? and if it be, in what sense it is imitative?" Here Gerard dismisses the claim that poetry imitates in the way the visual arts do, except in the case of drama, by producing a resemblance of a thing, because words do not resemble what they signify.¹ Poetry cannot form images or pictures of things. But Gerard produces another sense in which poetry can be said to imitate.

He draws an analogy with a type of painting in which the artist "instead of copying an individual object with which he is acquainted, invents /

¹ In this opinion, he is in agreement with Burke. See pp. 65f.

invents a subject" (p.280). Imitation in this sense does not depend on the truth of the resemblance between the imitation and the imitated, but rather on its departure from strict similarity, the falsity. Poetry, writes Gerard "is not called an imitation, to express the exactness with which it copies real things...but for the very contrary reason..." (p.283). Of course, Gerard is inhibited about using such a strong word as "false" of poetry, but he does contrast poetry with history, the subject of which, he says, is real in a way the subject of poetry is not.

It is unfortunate that Gerard does not make use of the most apt term for the kind of imitation he is seeking to define, that is to say, "fiction". But it is clear enough from what he does say that he has a certain distrust of the powers of invention, "which consists in a great extent and comprehensive-ness of imagination". (p.163). He fears that the imitations of poetic imagination lack the straightforward reference to things as they are which would make them true, and therefore he fears that art can mislead those who do not recognise its imitations as fictional. But since he sets out with no hostile attitude to the arts, he has to suppress these fears, for otherwise they would transform his Essay into an attack on taste.

Gerard's nervousness about imagination, imitation and fiction evidently proceeds from his adherence to the theory of truth which regards knowledge as justified by its correspondence with objects as they really exist. According to this empiricist attitude, typical of classical science, any contents of the mind for which there are no referents in objective existence are of doubtful status, and probably false. It will be recalled that Addison, under the influence of Locke, also worried about the veracity of fiction.¹

The foregoing paragraphs have anticipated the discussion of Gerard's theory of the imagination, an important part of his analysis of taste.

Being /

¹ See above, pp. 35ff.

Being subsequent to experience of external objects, taste is dependent on the senses, but it is more complex, because its principles are reflex or internal senses. The operations of these can be traced to the workings of the imagination, "which is considered as holding a middle rank between the bodily senses, and the rational and moral faculties". (143).

Basically imagination operates to overcome the atomic separateness of sense impressions and the hegemony of experience over meaning. In the imagination Gerard hopes to locate what flexibility of mental activity he can, and he needs some flexibility to account for art, in which ideas and figures appear which are not quite experienced previously and are organised into fresh combinations.

The imagination has such freedom of action because its operations are not governed by memory. It can in fact supply defects in memory, although not perhaps with entirely satisfactory results (v. p.151ff.). The data with which the imagination works are loosened from the temporal and spatial context memory imposes. It is the virtue of the imagination to be able to re-combine them in novel ways. The term Gerard uses to describe this function is, of course, "association", which takes place according to "certain general rules" (p.154). These include the simple associational relations of resemblance, contrariety and vicinity, and the complex ones, custom, co-existence, causation and order (ibid.).

What a reflex sense is perhaps is clearer now; it is one which involves the recognition of some of the associational relationships among objects experienced. Imaginative association, by addition to sense experience, constitutes taste; or as Gerard puts it, the operations of imagination produce taste "by being combined with the general laws of sensation" (p.162). Gerard and Kames thus have very similar views about association, taste and the principles of sensation;¹ but Gerard differs in his /

¹ See above, pp. 77f.

his emphasis on the role of imagination.

Judgment, however, is also an indispensable part of taste, according to Gerard. It is "the faculty which distinguishes things different, separates truth from falsehood, and compares together objects and their qualities" (p.83). It has a function in perceiving the qualities of objects, discriminating their kinds, comparing and compounding them. All these operations are preliminary to the experiences of taste. Gerard seems to make judgment not only a prerequisite of clear and accurate perception, but also a precondition of the sense experience to which taste is subsequent. Indeed, he goes on to speak of what judgment does that it "may completely exhibit to the internal senses, the beauties and excellencies of nature".

Judgment is used in making measurements, reckoning proportions and discovering beneficial tendencies. "It uses" writes Gerard, "all the methods which art and science indicate, for discovering those qualities that lie too deep spontaneously to strike the eye" (p.84). Overall, its business is comparison, especially in order to make generalisations. Gerard realises that if such relationships as judgment finds are part of the subject-matter of taste, then they must be apparent before, not after, the presentation of the experience of the work of art to the "internal senses"; but he also sees that these relationships are not strictly speaking qualities of the objects, but rather, as it were, between or among them. Hence if these relations are discovered by judgment, the acts of judgment must in some cases precede the functioning of taste.

Thus, when Gerard writes that judgment "is necessarily employed in that exhibition of the object to the [internal] senses which must be previous to their perception of it" (p.56), he does not mean the exhibition of a simple but of a complex object. That is to say, the object is a construct, formed by /

by the postulation of relations among simple objects (or qualities) as they are experienced by the external senses; the result is a proposition about a number of sense-perceptions. For instance, the discernment of plot and character in drama is not immediate, it requires exercise of judgment before the plot and the characterisation can be appraised by the taste.

Judgment and imagination show definite similarities in Gerard's account of them, which is therefore confusing. Although the section on imagination was much expanded in the third edition of the Essay, practically all of the new material is only illustrative. In Gerard's thinking, then, imagination and judgment always seem to have had near-identical roles in arranging and processing sense perceptions either before the operation of taste is completed or before it is actually begun. Perhaps the difference is that the imagination works by association and judgment by comparison; the one is passive, the other active. But the only certain thing is that Gerard has no less than two ways of making the operations of taste something more than mere sensation and capable of cultivation.

There is, however, more to Gerard's account of the connection of judgment with taste. Judgment is also said to fulfil its more traditional function in criticism of settling questions of the relative values of whole works, establishing the rules of the genres and deciding any work's success or failure by these rules. Judgment makes decisions about the general result of the whole series of lesser sensations which cluster together to form the experience of a whole work of art. When one raises one's head out of a book or pauses to consider a performance just ended, then judgment is used to reflect on the whole experience. Obviously judgment in this sense is a major part of criticism.

Gerard sums up his description of the dual nature of judgment in this way:

Thus /

Thus in all the operations of taste, judgment is employed; not only in presenting the subjects on which the senses exercise themselves; but also in comparing and weighing the perceptions and decrees of the senses themselves, and thence passing ultimate sentence upon the whole. (p. 88)

Judgment is not only the shaper of artistic entities enjoyed by taste, but also the arbiter of taste, with jurisdiction over the responses of the internal or reflex senses; the legal metaphor is licensed by the quotation above.

Immediately after this Gerard returns to the question of compensating forces in the faculty of taste. He asserts that "though the reflex senses and judgment must be united, yet, in a consistence with true taste, they may be united in very different proportions" (p.88). A strong judgment can make up for weak internal senses and vice versa. One can mainly enjoy either the feelings of taste, or the intellectual satisfaction of knowing what inspires those feelings. Total deprivation of either judgment or feeling is, of course, a disqualification, because it means a real deficiency of taste, but differing proportions of each make for the human differences among critics. Longinus, then, was a critic in whom "the internal senses were exquisitely delicate" (p.89), although his judgment was not equal, whereas Aristotle was quite the reverse, having more judgment than feeling.

There are signs here of a contrast developing in Gerard's thought between judgment and feeling. His attitude to the former is slightly ambivalent. He wants judgment to play an important part in taste, but only in one harmonious process with the operations of internal sense and imagination. Judgment must not overbear: it must act as arbiter but not as damper on the feelings. Although Gerard is clear that judgment is indispensable /

indispensable, yet at this point in the book it is to the imagination that he principally refers taste. Later in the Essay, however, imagination loses its importance for Gerard and he makes a contrast between judgment and sense, favouring the former.

The discussion of the internal senses, imagination and judgment comprises a theory of taste as a faculty whose status in Gerard's work is problematical. The difficulty is whether it describes ideal taste or normal taste. Gerard has ignored, in a quasi-philosophical, quasi-scientific fashion, the differences of particular cases, and pitched his description of taste at a high level of generalisation. The question is to what sort of individual examples do his theories refer: is taste as he has defined it the possession of a few (if any) perfectly endowed creatures, or is it by and large the possession of most men? The answer is important in relation to the further question of public critical judgments and the standard of taste. For given that there are genuine disagreements about taste, is Gerard inclined to regard these as due either to the distance between actual taste in individuals and perfect taste or to legitimate variations of otherwise perfect taste; or due either to the existence of some eccentrics who do not share the (happily) normal capacity of the majority, or to the possibility that no individual exactly matches the collocation of averages which is taste generally defined? But perhaps Gerard thought he knew how far his abstract description of the mind fitted the facts about real minds, and assumed this was sufficiently obvious to be unworthy of remark. This raises a profound difficulty discussed later.

When Gerard goes on to consider not the make-up of the organs of appreciation but their use, both in the case of the individual and that of the community, he immediately raises the kind of question posed above. He /

He starts from the position that taste is improvable. The individual must of course be endowed with the basic natural equipment, but it can be improved in use. But is taste as Gerard has defined it the basic natural endowment or the result of a process of development? The common-sense answer is the second, for, as Gerard himself asserts, although children show an awareness of beauty, sublimity and so on, it is generally recognised that their responses require guidance.

Gerard claims that there are four qualities which must be developed for good taste: sensibility, refinement, correctness and proportion of the several principles of taste. To each of these Gerard devotes a section in Part II of his Essay.

Sensibility is the degree of delicacy and responsiveness of the internal senses of taste. It is in fact less improvable by practice than any of the other qualities of taste. It is "but indirectly and remotely connected with the soundness or improvement of judgment" (p.102). Indeed, it seems in many ways opposed to judgment, which has to curb it when excessive and compensate for it when it is weak. One of the other qualities of good taste appears for this reason to be complementary to sensibility. Refinement is the result of habitual experience and is mainly the result of improved knowledge and judgment. Refined taste is capable of envisaging ideal perfection, and therefore of discovering standards by which to measure the excellence of objects of taste, works of art and so on.

At first glance correctness of taste as Gerard defines it seems to be little more than a sober ability to expose the sham. Only close attention to Gerard's curiously guarded language in this section reveals that correctness is really the faculty for passing accurate moral judgments "that we may not be imposed upon by false appearances; that we may neither approve shining faults, nor condemn modest virtues" (p.121). Despite the fact that /

that the sense of virtue is superior to the other principles of taste, Gerard evidently fears that the pleasures of the imagination may lure the innocent into liking what is vicious. Here is further evidence of his distrust of fiction and the fanciful.

The concept of correctness has a quite negative tendency; Gerard is most specific about the prevention of incorrectness of taste. This is achieved by the erection of standards, based, of course, on the experience of correct works of art. A touch of insipidity enters the discussion when he claims that it is better to base one's standards on mediocre works, if they are correct, than on superior works which have occasional faults.

It might be thought that in discussing correct standards Gerard has already moved over to considering taste in its public aspect. In fact, he makes it clear in this section that his subject is an internal standard of taste, based on personal experience; the correctness he advocates is to be established "within ourselves" (p.131). Nevertheless, the whole topic is obviously closely related to that of the standard of public taste, though Calvinistic traditions of personal moral autonomy may possibly have obscured this for Gerard.

The last topic re-opens the question of compensating capabilities, the meaning of proportions among the principles of taste is clear enough; no one reflex sense should unduly predominate (Gerard seems to have forgotten the superiority of the sense of virtue). For really excellent taste, then, "all the internal senses must be equally exercised" (p.137). "Till this enlargement and extensive amplitude of taste is once acquired" he continues, "our determinations must be essentially defective" (ibid.). Clearly Gerard means something more than proportion; he means uniform excellence.

But /

But the same is not true of the four qualities of taste just discussed. "When none of them is wanting" he writes, "a peculiar predominance of one will by no means vitiate taste" (p.141), and he goes on once more to comment on the idiosyncrasies of actual critics, Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Aristotle, in terms of their bias towards sensibility, refinement, correctness or "enlargement" (although it is not clear how any critic worthy of the name can do without a full share of the last quality).

Still, it is possible to imagine an ideal critic, a superman of fully developed taste, not weak in sensibility or refinement, correct in all his responses and with a perfect balance of reflex senses. Such a person would be good taste personified, the non-pareil, in Gerard's estimation:

Could any critic unite them all [sensibility, refinement, correctness and enlargement] in a great degree, to his sentiments we might appeal, as to an unerring standard of merit, in all the productions of the fine arts. The nearer one comes to a complete union of these qualities of taste, the higher authority will his [sic] decisions justly claim. (p.141)

Two points must be strongly emphasised. The possession of good taste grants authority, and good taste manifests itself in actual, and successful, judgments; "this excellence of taste supposes, not only culture, but culture judiciously applied" (p.96). Gerard is not dealing with a power of self-amusement, a closet study performed by one man on his own, but with a practice of speaking to be heard and, what is more, to secure agreement and deference.

How far such authority is personal to the man of supreme taste and how far it depends on the principles he embodies is not obvious. Gerard does not face the question whether the excellence of a critic is derived from the excellence of the principles of taste or the excellence of those principles /

principles is derived from their habitual use by men of good taste. In the first case, any man, however uncultivated, could, if he discovered the truth about taste, make excellent criticisms, but in the second no judgment could pass until sanctioned by a recognised master. Both these possible cases Gerard's argument.

Nevertheless, it is clear enough from Gerard's treatment of the improvement of individual taste that the aim of a man of taste is to practise a form of criticism which is both public and judicial. The perfectly developed man of taste, an ideal to which all men presumably aspire, does not merely sit and enjoy but also pronounces on his enjoyments and expects his pronouncements to be respected and noted by others. The possession of good taste not only enables one to discriminate among works of art for oneself but also authorises one to advise other people about the merits and demerits of works of art. It could well be said that here Gerard had the basis of a theory of the standard of taste twenty years before the publication of Part IV.

The first edition obscures this, however. Compared with its predecessors, Part III lacks cohesion. Although its title, "The Province and Importance of Taste", certainly suggests that Gerard will here deal with public taste, in fact what follows is a collection of essays, lacking the purposeful development of the first two parts, or of the later fourth one.

The first section of Part III, "How far Taste depends on the Imagination", is surely out of place; the theory of imagination is part of Gerard's epistemology, and should have preceded Part II. It has therefore already been considered. That Gerard should position this important part of his Essay so awkwardly supports the argument that he was unsure about the imagination and unable, or unwilling, to sort out its relation to, for instance, judgment. It must also be pointed out that he worried over the subject, expanding this section with a great deal of illustrative material for the third edition.

The /

The second section, on genius, is an attempt briefly to explain the creation of art, a vast subject beyond the scope of the Essay, extraneous to its theme. It throws very little light on the subject of taste and criticism. Of the further sections of Part III, "Of the Objects of Taste", "Of the Pleasures of Taste" and "Of the Effects of Taste on the Character and Passions" are only incidentally interesting. The third section, "Of the Influence of Taste on Criticism", is, however, more important. It comes nearest to discussion of the subject of public taste. Its full significance, however, will be considered later.

Part III, then provides a weak conclusion to the first edition of the Essay. It is as though Gerard loses the thread of his argument and fills out the volume with miscellaneous papers. Part IV, the result, no doubt, of reflection on Gerard's part, is much more purposeful. It opens with what in the context is a daring move. The first section is devoted, not to a first defence of the standard of taste, but to a detailed exposition of all the divergences possible in critical opinions and of some of their causes.

Gerard attributes variations in taste to inequalities in mental powers and differences in the amount and the kind of education. Some variation is due to differences in the external senses, but most is caused by differences in the internal or reflex senses. Individuals, says Gerard, do not share their associations, their degrees of sensibility or the same perspicacity in inferring design. The skill of comparison is, in addition, variable. Gerard also relaxes his earlier attitude and admits that people are more often than not biased in favour of one or other of the principles of taste - novelty, grandeur, beauty and so on (p.203). Taste requires opportunity and exercise to develop, and the circumstances of both will give a particular direction to the development, hence leading to diversity.

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The initial emphasis by Gerard on variety makes for an impression of confusion among the tastes of men. Once allowance is made for all the individual differences Gerard suggests are probable, absolute agreement in matters of taste can hardly be expected. It is quite clear that Gerard is not going to seek for rules of taste at the lowest level of information, among the actual preferences of individuals, because they are so diverse; he will seek for principles at a higher level of generalisation. By presenting a picture of public taste as a mass of individual opinions all unavoidably different, Gerard makes plausible his search for a standard in general terms, in terms of tendencies and broad inclinations, rather than in single judgments and specific cases. The standard of taste, in other words, will be related by inference or induction to the actual responses and judgments of men.

The deeper significance of Gerard's awareness of the variety of tastes is that he presents individuals as more or less equivalent in their viewpoints. Not only do individuals really differ in their judgments, their ability to make judgments and in their sensibilities, but they differ in ways difficult to avoid or correct. Hence there is little justification for a personal authority in criticism. An attempt to impose the views of one man can only lead to violent disagreement and an increase in confusion. The standard of taste cannot be defined unless critics humbly agree to forego their favourite views and seek to discover what they have in common with others. The model for such objective research, which will involve empirical descriptions of critical reactions, is, of course, natural philosophy.

As Gerard accumulates the evidence of variation in taste, the reader is inclined to ask whether there is not some possibility of remedying the general lack of control and organisation. Gerard, of course, does not directly deny the possibility of a standard of taste; his hints about it suggest that among all the varied opinions some are more justified than others. Logically /

Logically, indeed, this must be so; if there is a standard of taste, some among a variety of opinions must be nearer to conforming to it than others. That is to say, the claim that there is a standard of taste is synonymous with the claim that critical judgments vary systematically and in a measurable degree from some identifiable fixed point. In practice, this means that the standard of taste will not be immediately obvious; it will have to be revealed by patient examination. As Gerard says, "it is the variety of tastes obvious in mankind, that renders it necessary to enquire concerning a standard of taste" (207). It follows that Gerard regards the variety of tastes not as pure diversity but as deviation from a norm which, although, practically, difficult to discern, is not absolutely beyond discovery. And he himself intends to show, in principle, how it is to be discovered.

First of all, however, Gerard feels bound to refute the opposite point of view, which takes the form of the argument "so generally admitted, as to have passed into a proverb: That tastes are not to be disputed" (p.207). This quite simply means that the variety of tastes is random. Each one is strictly incomparable with the rest and bears no relation to them. The argument that there is no disputing tastes is therefore fundamentally relativistic. Gerard has to attack it vigorously:

It would imply that every man is to himself an infallible judge of beauty and deformity, of excellence and defect; it would imply that the same objects, and the same qualities of objects, may merit at once approbation and disgust; it would imply that our natural principles of taste, unlike to all the rest both of our mental faculties, and our bodily powers, are incapable of being either improved or perverted; it would infer [sic] that it is absurd to censure any relish, however singularly gross; it would put all critical discussions precisely on a level with Don Quixote's dissertations on giants and enchantments.

(pp. 207f)

The passage is of considerable interest for the counter-implications Gerard makes: that one cannot be a judge to oneself, privately and infallibly; that objects and qualities have fixed merits; that the principles of taste can be cultivated or vitiated, and hence are open to influence; and that it is not absurd to condemn someone else's taste. The last is Gerard's chief objection. He virtually refuses to accept that the disputes about taste, which he regards as quite ordinary and usual features of human behaviour, could be irrational and inexplicable.

An opponent Gerard has very much in mind here is Hume.¹ He refers to Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste" specifically in connection with the question of how far sentiments of taste are disputable. He offers three objections to Hume. The first is that if sentiments of taste are indisputable because they merely reflect "some congruity between certain objects and our faculties, and nothing more" (p.213), much the same can be said of the "external senses", sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. But, says Gerard, "it is readily acknowledged concerning every one of the external senses, that in one man it is more acute than in another" (ibid.). If, however, there were not accepted practical procedures for verifying claims, for instance, to see distant objects beyond the range of most people's vision, doubts of the sort Hume raises about taste would arise in the case of the external senses as well. Gerard's argument glosses over the essential difference between internal and external senses.

Gerard's second point, which has already been encountered in discussing Kames's concept of the standard of taste,² is directed against the supposition made for argument's sake in the first objection to Hume, that is, that sentiments are only a sign of congruity between object and faculty involved. Gerard declares that the sentiment which arises on experiencing an object is actually caused by a quality in that object. If it fails to have the usual /

¹ See Appendix II.

² See above, pp. 94ff.

usual effect on a person, then that person is convicted of a deficiency in his receptivity. But Gerard's concept of a cause which, in observable instances, fails to bring about its effect for no apparent reason is, to say the least, peculiar. The central problem, though, is not here but in Gerard's unthinking usage "a quality acknowledged to belong to an object" (p.214) to describe the cause of the natural or usual sentiment. This spectacularly begs the question, for presumably those who acknowledge the quality are those who feel its "usual" effect; for the rest, the "cause" does not exist and so they can neither fail nor succeed in responding to it. Besides, the concept of natural and usual responses really does make it absurd for someone to claim to have better taste than someone else, or more acute senses. The second objection demolishes the first.

Although these two answers to Hume are flimsy, taken together they are interesting because they bring out a notable conflict in Gerard's discussion of the standard of taste. On one hand, there is the faith in the expert critic, able to guide and improve the taste of others, endowed with greater sensibility and culture, with a paternalistic role in criticism; on the other hand, there is the equal conviction that taste is one of the natural powers of man, able to be studied scientifically, described generally and attributed universally, in more or less standard form, to all men.

Thus there are two possible foundations for a standard of taste. One is individualistic and depends on the proposition that some men are better critics than others, and a few are the best. Such superiority of taste authorises them to instruct their fellows in what to admire and what to avoid, and so on, just as, in any group, the man with the keenest sight tells the others what is happening far away, and thus induces them to take appropriate action. The other type of authority depends on a quite opposite, egalitarian point of view, which claims that all men have basically the same nature, and therefore /

therefore all things being equal they ought to react in the same way to the same stimuli. Authority on this second view is not due to exceptional powers but to normal and natural abilities, which could be developed in anybody.

One of the negative strengths of the argument that there is no disputing about taste is that it strikes at both these points of view. It challenges directly the concept of authority in matters of taste by denying that any sort of statistically average opinion has intrinsic merit other than the purely descriptive. Gerard's opposition to these views is impelled by his observation that authority is in fact claimed and, apparently, acknowledged, and that it must be if criticism as he understands it is a reasonable and explicable business. He cannot conceive that the assertions of critics and the agreements of their audience could be based on empty notions of authority, or on none at all. Indeed, he, like Kames, cannot conceive of a criticism which does not take the form of pronouncements of quasi-judicial verdicts. His model is legalistic, or perhaps, in keeping with his profession, fundamentally dogmatical - the elaboration and propagation of succinct, kernel propositions, whose meanings are taken to be unchanging, like the Ten Commandments or the Westminster Confession. The limitation is in his view of what criticism is for, which is indissolubly linked with his authoritarian assumptions. Ironically, his attempts to define the kind of authority involved leads him in two directions.

Gerard's last point against Hume is that "taste implies judgment, as well as sentiment" (p.214). Here Gerard is consistent with the earlier parts of his book, in which he has frequently made judgment a part of taste. It is one of his ways of expressing his awareness that taste has a public aspect, for he conceives of judgment as referring "to something beyond ourselves" (ibid.) Obviously, Gerard's taste and Hume's taste are quite different in this respect. Gerard's /

Gerard's third objection is little more than an assertion of his conviction that taste is not absurd, but based on discernible principles. This marks the impasse between Gerard and Hume.

The effort to combat the argument that taste is indisputable puts severe strain on Gerard's theories. He seems unwilling or unable to modify his concept of authoritarian criticism or to renounce the main points of an empiricist sensationalism not unlike Hume's. He appears only to forget the one while dealing with the other. He does not reject or replace the theory of causal sensations and private sentiments, yet he insists that this is only one aspect of taste and that it is united with judgment and authority.

He begins to open up gaps between sentiment and judgment, sensation and reflex acts. Taste, he says, "may be considered either as a species of sensation, or as a species of discernment" (p.214). The first aspect is part of the attempt to relate taste to objects and therefore to experience, the other is part of the effort to show how taste can be authoritative and open to standards and improvement.

The further Gerard describes them, however, the more one conflicts with the other. He must incorporate judgment for the sake of the external standard it is supposed to acknowledge: "to find fault with any taste necessarily implies the acknowledgment of a right and wrong, and of a standard by means of which they may be distinguished..." (p.208). But he has explained sentiment in such mechanical cause-and-effect terms that there is little scope for influencing its workings, by judgment or anything else. As a "species of sensation" taste is practically indistinguishable from the indisputable sentiments Hume describes; because the structure of the mind is "unalterable" (p.215) and various among men, it is not possible "that all men should be equally pleased, or that they should be pleased with precisely the same things" (ibid.). There is, then, no uniformity of taste.

Or /

Or, at least, there is no uniformity of taste at that level, the level of taste as sensation. But Gerard claims that "there may be a standard of taste in respect of its reflex acts" (p.215). This seems to mean that although Gerard believes one cannot in fact help one's feelings, one can compare one's ability to justify them or discern their causes with someone else's, and agree to accept his superior judgment, despite one's inferior capacities.

This concept of the standard of taste seems to be analogous to the concept of an objective reality which it is the aim of science to describe. By comparing various observations and collating them, a description of the cause of them, the object, can be synthesised. Such a description need not coincide exactly with any actual experience, but clearly any attempt to compare actual experiences would have to take note of what in principle they held in common in order to make a genuine comparison. The sum of these common qualities would form an objective description of the nature of the thing observed, whether it was an astronomical event, a mechanical experiment or a work of art. Such a description would be a basis for deciding to what extent any individual's experience was idiosyncratic. That element of experience could not be denied, but, once identified, it might be eliminated as the reason for judgments of taste which could have more than personal significance.

Gerard seems to conceive that such discriminations among the information provided the individual by his senses might be made by judgment, and therefore that a standard of taste is possible at that level. But at the level of sensation all information about the outside world is equivalent. There is nothing to distinguish a sensation which is unique to the individual from one which is in principle common to several; the feeling is always the same and one cannot help having it. Again there is a contrast between a discriminatory attitude, and an egalitarian one.

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The tendency to bifurcation in Gerard's thinking can be further elucidated by pointing out that not only are there two types of authority involved but also two types of standard. A standard can either be a level of attainment which ought to be achieved, and is occasionally approached and perhaps even reached, or it can be the level of attainment which as a matter of fact is actually arrived at. The first is virtually timeless, the second is retrospective; there is a difference between the standard expected of participants before they begin to perform and the standard of their performance reviewed after it has ended. The first standard obviously influences strongly how and why the activity is carried out, the second is merely a comment upon that activity after it has taken place.

The two types of standard may, of course, have much in common in their contents. For instance, a football team's standard is expressed in the number of goals scored and matches won, whether it is the ideal to which they aspire or the statistics of the results of their games. The real difference between the two standards is that one can fail to achieve the first, but not the second. As far as the retrospective standard of actual achievement is concerned, the language of success and failure is inapplicable.

This important point is often obscured by the similarity of content of the two standards. Thus, a football team presumably aims (at all times) for a standard of victory in all its games, and it may or may not succeed in reaching that standard, and can be criticised accordingly. But if at the end of a season its standard of play is such that it has lost half its matches, it cannot be said to have succeeded or failed to reach its standard in that sense, because "standard" here means what is, not what ought to be attained. In short, the word "standard" itself includes that problem of "is" and "ought" which Hume studied. It underlies the question of whether taste is disputable or /

or not, whether, as Gerard says, (quoting Kames)¹, it is "absurd to assert.... that in some instances, 'a man ought not to be pleased when he is, or ought to be pleased when he is not'" (p.218).

The two kinds of standard differ in the way that the idea of a scientific law of nature differs from the ordinary concept of law in the sense of a rule of society. A natural law is a standard of what is the case, whereas the laws of society state what ought to be the case. It is, of course, confusing and unfortunate that both terms, "standard" and "law", should have these nearly-related, but yet conflicting, meanings, but that this is so is perhaps due, not only to the continuity of ideas, but also to the difficulty of assimilating the change in the concept of authority which is at the centre of the scientific revolution of modern times.

Natural philosophy developed for its own purposes a concept of authority based on empirical observation. The novelty of this concept was not at first sufficiently appreciated, the problem of "is" and "ought" was not identified and the scientific authority of "is" was assimilated to the previous forms of the authority of "ought". The difficulty becomes most acute when writers such as Gerard attempt to base directive laws on a descriptive, quasi-scientific foundation, since it is logically impossible to derive imperative propositions from declarative premises.

Thus, to the obvious question of which kind of standard the standard of taste is, the answer in Gerard's case is that it is both. Or rather, since he never made the distinction between the two kinds of standard which is suggested above, he moves between both possibilities at his convenience. This movement is not, however, random, for it corresponds to the shifts in his argument between consideration of reason and judgment and of the senses and sentiment. In the case of taste as sensation, Gerard comes close to defining the standard of taste in the second sense, consistent with the concept /

¹ See above, p.91.

concept of a natural law, as a retrospective description of what has been accomplished; in the case of taste as discernment, he is much more inclined to admit a dynamic element of change and improvement, suggesting aims and ideals, in short, a standard in the first sense.

A revealing difference between the two kinds of standard is in the matter of regulation. A standard in the first sense is regulative, it affects behaviour; a standard in the second sense lacks this feature. At one point Gerard describes the standard of taste as though it were not in fact regulative of individual taste:

A standard of taste is not something by which all tastes may be reconciled and brought to coincide: it is only something by which it may be determined, which is the best among tastes various, contending, and incapable of coinciding perfectly. (p.216)

The standard of taste in this context is not a source of general rules for the guidance of those wishing to acquire the ability to appreciate things of beauty, sublimity, and so on. Rather it is only an independent survey of the activities of men exercising their taste in order to establish a scale of comparison out of them.

The criteria of this retrospective analysis are not evident. It is hard, however, to envisage how the distinction of having the "best" taste could, in this scheme, be regarded as a meritorious achievement, and not just as an indifferent statement of fact, from which nothing significant can follow. For how could someone whose taste was stigmatised by the standard as thoroughly bad do anything to alter his situation, when his feelings are dependent on the unalterable structure of his mind and he presumably therefore lacks the material for his reflex senses to work upon?

Gerard does not maintain for long this static version of the standard of taste. He has to recognise that if someone's taste is condemned he will seek /

seek to change it for the better, and if someone's taste is praised that will inspire emulation in others. Only if he abandoned entirely the language of "better" and "worse" in connection with taste - an unnatural and inconvenient course of action - could Gerard avoid facing these possibilities, though they are strictly incompatible with what he says of a standard's not being "something by which all tastes may be reconciled". In the end he compromises. Although a simple and instantaneous change of sentiment because of a reasoned judgment is said to be impossible, because it would mean an alteration in the mental make-up of the individual, a gradual erosion of unwanted habits may lead to improvement:

The firmest conviction of reason cannot prevent a perverted sensation; it must, in spite [sic] of that conviction, continue to be received, till the natural peculiarity or the habit which occasions it, be corrected by proper exercise and culture. (p.219)

This is more in harmony with the thesis that taste is improvable and that children can be educated. But it conflicts with the thesis that the experience of the senses is the effect of qualities of external objects and cannot be modified by judgment. The more Gerard develops the concept of a standard, especially in the first way, towards a regulative and idealistic version, the more it clashes with some basic empiricist assumptions that he makes.

Gerard often comes close to dividing taste between sense and judgment and to dividing the standard of taste in a similar fashion, but he does not actually come to the point of treating taste as two separate subjects. This is surely just. The important and interesting truth about taste is not the apparent oppositions within it, but that they are nevertheless closely related to form a paradoxical whole. In attempting to resolve this paradox, Gerard seems to produce a variety of modifications of either side /

side of the question; the Essay becomes a search for a mediating principle with power to reconcile sense and reason and remain independent of them. Gerard's worrying at what amounts to a single fundamental problem can easily seem an expression of desire for some new departure, a radical revision of outworn concepts.

Significantly, there is a third principle, besides sensation and judgment, in Gerard's account of taste, and he seems to have dimly recognised its potential because in the third edition he re-worked the section devoted to it. The concept is, of course, the imagination. It is a more or less autonomous power between the senses and the judgment. But Gerard ultimately fails to make much use of it; he even failed to integrate it well into his Essay. There are signs of a certain distrust of it. In Part IV it hardly appears; sense and judgment are left face to face.

With the muddled compromise mentioned above, in which the standard of taste is left based on causal relations but yet able to influence opinions, Gerard leaves the problem of opposing the argument that there is no disputing about taste. He turns instead to discussing the contents of the standard of taste. Once again he begins with bold attacking moves. He gives a whole section to showing that "General Approbation is not the immediate Standard of Taste" (Part IV, section iv). That he has so little difficulty is in no small way due to his interpretation of general approbation as a simple majority verdict. Just as in the case of the variety of individual tastes, Gerard easily shows that standards of taste are affected by geography and history. The conclusion he draws is that a true standard of taste must be based on principles which escape the vicissitudes of time and place.

Gerard's purpose is to show that a standard of taste and even critical judgment are impossible if the intrinsic qualities of works of art and so on are not taken into account:

No /

No new work can obtain general approbation in an instant; it is of slow growth, it requires considerable time to reach maturity. In this interval, the intrinsic merit of the work is the same that it is afterwards: but there will be no possible means of appretiating it. Must every man then suspend his judgment, till numbers be prepared to declare their sentiments together? Must he obstinately refuse all credit to his own feelings and discernment, till the time come for the public to give its voice? This would be in some measure inconsistent with that authority of sentiment, on account of which it claims to be a standard. (p.239)

It is a splendid passage, but one suspects the opposition is made of straw. A naive majority-verdict version of the general approbation theory of the standard of taste is surely a defenceless position. Its only value, in the context of Gerard's Essay, is that it allows him to bring out the importance of intrinsic qualities.

By reducing the theory that the standard of taste is based on general approbation to absurdity, Gerard makes way for the thesis that what is required is justification of critical verdicts by reference to their contents, their statements about their subject-matter. The standard of taste cannot be simply a statistical average, because, for one thing, it would be unworkable until a number of people had passed their verdicts.

The real problem Gerard raises here is how a new work (and all works at some time are new) ever obtains any reputation at all, if reputation is solely a matter of general approbation. Gerard says that in fact critics anticipate the opinions of the many, trying to uphold their particular judgments by pointing to qualities in the work of art which have had or should have a determined effect. He claims that critics not only give reasons to justify their views but base their reasons on more general observations, so that the standard of taste is a matter of principle:

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The critic founds not his confidence merely on his feelings; he justifies it by reasons; he shows that it has beauties similar, equal, or superior to those which have generally pleased. His producing such reasons implies an acknowledgment, that sentiment may be tried by general principles, and is authorised by its coincidence with them. (p.240)

Clearly, the general principles are in some sense the basis of critical authority.

An immediate problem is how Gerard's general principles are distinguished from (and superior to) general approbation. This seems to be the answer. Naive majority-verdict general approbation yields generalisations which are simply derived from particulars, summary titles or pure collections of results without system. Gerard's general principles, on the other hand, are systematic, not only related to the data but also conditioned by larger assumptions. They do not just classify the information, but rationalise it according to previously determined concepts of organisation. The categories of this higher form of generalisation have an authority greater than and independent of that lent by mere responsiveness to the nature of the particulars concerned.

The distinction is a very fine one, and Gerard struggles to elucidate it. It is obliquely suggested in the first sentence of section iv of Part IV:

Others, acknowledging the variety of men's tastes, in relation to individual objects, to be real, have supposed that a standard may notwithstanding be inferred immediately from experience of their judgments concerning these objects. (p.225)

The italicised word is the significant one. The opinion that the standard of taste can be derived "immediately" from the particular judgments of men is not Gerard's opinion. Such direct inferences from the responses of taste are not his general principles.

That /

That is not to say, however, that Gerard entirely rejects the simpler type of generalisations about taste:

When we deny that general approbation is the proper or immediate standard, we are far from insinuating that it is of no account.

It is of very great account. Though it be not itself the standard, it is the materials of which the standard must be composed: it is the block from which it must be hewed out: it is the principal of those ingredients from which it must be extracted. It holds the same place in this enquiry, that experiments and observations concerning the real phaenomena of things, hold in physical investigations of the laws of the material world. (p.248)

After some twenty pages attacking general approbation as a standard of taste, this re-instatement of the notion is at first sight surprising. The explanation is contained in the metaphor from sculpture: the standard of taste, in Gerard's view, does come from the results of general approbation, but it requires to be worked out with a tool, a method got from elsewhere. It is this addition which distinguishes his general principles.

The last sentence of the quotation above reveals the analogy which governs Gerard's treatment of the standard of taste. The reference there is to rudimentary scientific method. Gerard goes on to expand the comparison. He briefly explains the derivation and application of what he consistently refers to as a law of nature. He evidently conceives of such a law as something more than a mere generalisation. It must be able to account "for phaenomena which at first sight appear unaccountable" (p.249)¹, to reconcile seeming discordances and show that they "proceed from the same principle differently modified" (ibid.). In short, it answers many purposes which could not be answered by a mere collection of the experiments from which it is inferred (ibid.). The verdicts of general approbation correspond to such collections, while the general principles of taste are like scientific laws.

In /

¹ Here Gerard shows superior insight to Burke. Compare above, p.46.

In Part III, section iii, "Of the influence of Taste on Criticism", Gerard fore-shadowed the scientific analogy. The particular beauties and faults perceived by taste are there said to be the "rude materials, and nothing more" (p.171) upon which the critic works:

In order, therefore, to form an able critic, taste must be attended with a philosophical genius, which may subject these materials to a regular induction, reduce them into classes, and determine the general rules which govern them. (p. 171)

"Philosophical" here means "scientific". If the scientific spirit is wanting, "our observations will be trifling, superficial, unconnected, and perplexed with too great particularity" (p.174). This is the fault Gerard finds in the dicta of general approbation. In an extensive footnote (pp.173f.), Gerard defends his conception of induction with the aid of a quotation from Bacon's Novum Organum, which puts it beyond doubt that he is assimilating the business of criticism to that of scientific research, albeit along rather out-of-date lines, even in the mid-eighteenth century.

Gerard compares the principles of taste not only with the laws of science but also with those of mechanics. This allows him to draw a useful analogy when it comes to establishing that the general principles will not stifle creative genius but rather give the artist the knowledge to develop his talents:

From a person who satisfies himself with observing and admiring a number of curious machines, the utmost that can be expected is, the production of a similar machine: it is only from him who, either by his natural sagacity, or by study, has acquired a comprehension of the general principles of mechanics, that we can expect the invention of new and dissimilar machines, or even any considerable improvement of the former. The same must happen in the fine arts. (pp.270f.)

The general principles of taste, then, are not restricted to what has been accomplished, but cover also a range of future possibilities. This capacity, it might be said, is equivalent to the power of prediction of scientific (or mechanical) theory. It is not going too far to add what Gerard omits : that such potential is not confined to the creation of new art but also enables the critic securely to extend his opinions from what has been known and admired to what is new and debatable.

In a sentence summarising the argument, Gerard also discloses what the general principles of taste are:

Thus, as in natural philosophy it is not collections of experiments and observations, but the general conclusions legitimately deduced from them, that amount to an explication of the course of nature; so in the fine arts it is not the several sentiments of individuals, but just conclusions deduced from them, concerning the qualities in objects which gratify taste, and the simple mental principles from whose operation the gratification is derived, that serve immediately for estimating excellence or faultiness. (p.266f.)

Clearly the general principles of taste are in a real sense descriptive, but their descriptiveness is not particularised. Like scientific laws, they state conditions and consequences, and describe classes of events, but they are not themselves reports of direct observations. Rather they are the reason for deciding which observation statements are accurate and which are not.

But here the similarity between the principles and scientific laws seems to end. For whereas the object of a scientific law is, as Gerard says, "an explication of the course of nature", the object of the principles of taste is not just to obtain an agreed description of a work of art but "for estimating excellence or faultiness", that is to say, to authorise critical judgments.

No /

No doubt Gerard was attracted to the scientific manner as a way round the problem of the indisputability of taste because science seems to reject neither empirical sensitivity to experience nor the concept of authority. Its empiricism lies in its experimental tradition. Gerard correctly identifies this. But the problem is what in the subject of taste is truly equivalent to experimental evidence in science. Gerard appears to offer two answers: the qualities of objects which evoke particular responses and the general judgments of mankind in matters of taste. In fact, these are not separate answers so much as limiting extremes. That is to say, an experimentally based "science of taste" must take for its data neither plain descriptions of things merely nor plain verdicts of critics merely, but a synthesis of the two. Gerard does not inquire too closely into how the scientist of taste could proceed impartially to assemble such data in an area where his judgment, or partiality, is expressly in operation as part of his experiments.

This raises the second point, concerning scientific authority. Gerard was right in thinking that there is such a thing. It rests both on claims to experimental verifiability, which Gerard can only weakly make for his science of taste, and the methodology of science. Both these foundations are, of course, constantly under examination by scientists and philosophers. A fault in Gerard is that he too naively accepts one or two theories about them.

But a greater failing is in not seeing that a science which justifies itself by appealing to observation and correct method claims an authority which is, in theory at least, impersonal. It is also, again in theory, open to revision. Gerard occasionally approaches these opinions. He does sometimes suggest that the standard of taste is not a consequence of privilege or extraordinary capacities, and he does sometimes imply, in tracing the variation of taste because of history and geography, that the standard /

of taste is mutable. But one could not say these were consistently held opinions or represent his usual meaning when he talks of authority and the standard of taste.

Gerard was not unusual in these misapprehensions. The background to them is the triumph of Newton. Here was a scientific achievement which relied on impersonally-demonstrated universal laws, yet clearly it had bestowed real power and status on its author. Newton himself had exploited this paradox, as many scientists before and since have used their professional eminence as a means to more worldly success. It has often been remarked how unhelpful was Newton's overlordship to the science of his followers, because his authority weighed heavily on them; but it was also a troublesome example in other fields. For Newton a consolidation of his position as discoverer of the new order set a magnificent precedent.

He established the authority of the scientist in strongly personal terms (so that his admirers endowed him with a character to suit, they thought, his noble achievements). He was recognised as the founder of a school of thought. Extravagant compliments, like Pope's, were directed to him. Many found his mathematical proofs beyond them and, like Locke, had to take the justness of his conclusions on trust; they could hardly do so without investing him with personal authority. And all this set the style for science in the eighteenth century. A scientist was a man who did experiments, formulated principles, laid down laws of nature and thus led ignorant mankind to the greater knowledge he alone could understand for himself.

Hence Gerard, impressed by the authority of science, was unable to extricate it from associations of arbitrariness and absolutism. He can see how great is the scope for individual variation and allow the highest degree of responsiveness to the actual, multifarious facts of the tastes of men, yet he is also incapable of conceding that the rule of authority, of /

of personal power over the tastes of others, is thereby almost completely undermined. Partly, of course, he sees such an admission as an admission of chaos, but partly he conceives it as unnecessary, because in science he seems to see just that combination of empiricism with authority which would suit his needs.

There is, however, a much deeper problem at issue here. Gerard wished to establish a scientific standard of taste. It would consist of general principles "experimentally" derived from "the qualities in objects which gratify taste, and the simple mental principles from whose operation the gratification is derived" (p.266f.). Such a standard he regards as indisputably authoritative. The reason for this belief is that the standard would be scientific, that is to say, based on experiments. But the core of this belief is that somehow scientific research arrives at an accurate description of actuality; that is to say, it tells the truth about nature. In the "science of taste", then, the ultimate descriptions would be given of the fixed entities which are the "objects" of taste. The gratifying properties and the mental principles involved could be set down for any given exercise of taste, and once the scientific critic, with his perfected theory and method, had set down the account of the data, variation in reports would be absurd. Any observer, from any point of view, ought to see the same thing.

Gerard, however, has already shown that in fact time and place (that is, variety of viewpoint) have a constant distorting effect on accounts of objects and taste experience, and hence on the standard of taste as it is known in real life. The scientific standard of taste, then, is somehow to be unaffected by history and geography. Anyone, anywhere, at any time, must be able to reach the scientific conclusion in matters of taste. Practically, this has not, in Gerard's opinion, been possible until his time. But is it possible at all?

A very similar problem occurs in physics in the question of the existence or not of what is called Absolute Space. For centuries the sun was regarded as mobile in relation to the earth; daily observations confirmed this. It was also accepted that the moon and planets, and even the stars beyond, also moved round the earth. But attempts to define these motions both accurately and with the degree of elegance thought appropriate to the majesty of the heavens met with diminishing success until two important changes were made.

First, sacrificing appearance to theoretical elegance, Copernicus advocated the view that the earth and the other planets be supposed to move relative to the sun, and, second, Kepler, sacrificing theoretical elegance to careful observation (by Brahe) and calculation, replaced circular motion with elliptical motion for planetary orbits. As a result, the solar system could be described with fewer complications and higher accuracy.

It was, of course, Isaac Newton who accomplished such a description. But he also went further and universalised it. He abolished the distinction between celestial and terrestrial mechanics and made the same laws hold everywhere. Thus, if he was right, his law of gravity applied not only to the relative motions of the sun and earth or the earth and moon, but also to the earth and a cannon-ball, or to two billiard balls - in short, to any two (or more) bodies with mass. Furthermore, the gravitational influence is mutual; the earth "attracts" the moon and the moon, to a lesser extent proportional to its inferior size, "attracts" the earth. If, therefor, the earth moves around the sun, the sun must move a little as a result; their relationship is not like that of a ball on a string swung round a fixed centre but rather of a (very unbalanced) dumb-bell whirled in the air.

If a dumb-bell were in fact whirled through the air on earth, the path traced in space by one of its ends would be, of course, quite complex. Firstly, it would whirl. Secondly, it would have a trajectory in the air, from /

from the hand of the thrower to its fall to the ground. But in that time the earth itself would move on in its orbit round the sun, so that the path of the dumb-bell would move with it. If the sun were also moving, taking the earth, and the dumb-bell (and all the planets and comets) along, then a further adjustment in the definition of the path of the dumb-bell-end would be required; such a movement of the solar system could be in relation, for instance, to the nearest stars. The nearest stars might also, conceivably, be in motion, and indeed the whole material universe might be shifting along together, taking its stars, our sun, the earth and our whirling dumb-bell with it.

Now, supposing one body (say, the end of our dumb-bell) happened, at some instant, not to participate in the general movement of the material universe. It would, of course, appear relative to the rest of the cosmos to be moving; indeed, it would apparently be the only indisputably moving object from all material points of view in the universe (except its own). But although it appeared to be in motion, it would, ex hypothesi, really be at rest; Newton called this state of rest absolute. And although all the other parts of the material universe appeared at rest in relation to each other, they would, again ex hypothesi, really be in motion; Newton called this Absolute Motion.

It was possible that all, some or none of the bodies in the universe were at any given time in Absolute Motion or not. Thus, although all might maintain their distances from and aspects to each other, they could nevertheless be changing their real places, despite appearances. Such change of place requires that the places be fixed and immovable despite what happens to the bodies. The arrangement of fixed, immutable places Newton called Absolute Space. In relation to Absolute Space, everything in the universe is unequivocally either at rest or in motion; that is to say, all other forms of motion and rest are in relation to other material bodies only, and must be so described.

Besides /

Besides Absolute Space, Newton also postulated Absolute Time, an even, equable succession of instants in one direction, past to present to future. Any event, and every event, has one unique co-ordinate in Absolute Time which identifies the point in the flow of time when that event occurs. Events with the same value of time co-ordinate are simultaneous.

The aim of the concept of Absolute Motion is to allow Newton to speak unequivocally of the real rather than of the apparent change of place of objects, because the apparent change of place may be relative only to the observer. Similarly, Gerard aims to find a standard of taste based not on the apparent qualities of works of art but on their real qualities. He points out that if a masterpiece were to appear "in an obscure and inconsiderable country, which has little connexion or intercourse with foreigners: it could obtain only a very limited approbation" (p.234). Yet it seems absurd to say that the work's merit did not exist until it was universally recognised:

If the extent of the approbation which a work obtains, depend so much on the celebrity of the country where it is produced, and on other circumstances wholly accidental or extraneous, it cannot alone or immediately be the measure of its intrinsic merit. (p.235)

Obviously, the standard of taste must not be distorted by accidental circumstances, but must be true to the intrinsic merits of works of art. Just as Gerard believes that a truly authoritative standard can only be derived from descriptions of the intrinsic natures of works of art, and not from the reports of observers, who may be biassed by historical or geographical factors, Newton believes that an accurate physics must discount the distortions of the observer's viewpoint and strive to describe the real positions of objects and events in space and time.

All events, therefore, have four co-ordinates, three in Absolute Space and one in Absolute Time, which define their positions in the Newtonian universe. By comparing space co-ordinates at known distances of time, the direction /

direction and rate of change of objects in the universe could be calculated, and, in principle, an expression derived of all the possible positions of the object for all time. Hence an ultimate description of the universe is possible, although, of course, very difficult to achieve, since it would have to take into account the actions and interactions of vast numbers of objects, each with its own formula of possibilities.

The ultimate description would consist of such formulae of potential tracks in Absolute Space, which would express the rates of change of the co-ordinates of objects. By inserting a particular time value, the spatial co-ordinates for that instant could be computed. The formulae would be the abstract framework of the life-histories of objects.

The value of these descriptions of all possible spatial positions of objects for all instants in time would be their absoluteness, their freedom from the limitations of space and time. Obviously, in a changing world, objects at one time may easily have changed their positions in space in a short time after, so that a later observer will never see what his predecessors saw. But if he has the co-ordinates of the objects he sees and of those seen previously, and the formula for the rate of change of the positions of the objects, he can perform a calculation to confirm that what he observes is equivalent to what was observed. When he has confirmed such an equivalence, he can safely go on to compare his observations with his predecessors', and make judgments as though he and they had seen the same thing. Thus, the theory of Absolute Space and Time made it feasible for observers to ignore their own limitations in space and time in comparing their observations. They could all refer their experiments to one standard formulation in order to be sure they were discussing the same thing.

In a very similar way Gerard wishes the standard of taste to offer absolute descriptions of works of art and qualities in objects which cause emotions. Even although different critics feel differently, they ought, he says, to be able to compute, from the information of their own experiences, times and places, what the general formula for responses of taste to any given /

given object should be and use that as a standard of comparison, not only between objects of taste but also between critics and their judgments of any given object. Critics ought to be dealing, not simply with their feelings, but with an extrapolation from them which is beyond the changes wrought by time and place, an extrapolation which when associated with any particular time and place generates the description of the appropriate and actual feeling, just as the formula for the life-history of any object, when a value is inserted in its space and time co-ordinates, will generate a description of the object's position in Absolute Space and Time.

The concept of Absolute Space and Time involves a re-definition of motion and rest in order to avoid circular, relativistic arguments. The question "Does the earth really move?" could theoretically be answered without reference to the sun, the planets or the stars, thus side-stepping the retort that the earth's movement is only apparent and that it is the others that "really" move. Newton offers the possibility of a cosmology which is not only accurate and elegant but also as basic as can be, and, in fact, indisputable. Once the Absolute Velocity of the Absolute Motion in Absolute Space of a body is known, no more fundamental definition of that body can be offered. And once such information is gathered about one body, because of the universality of Newtonian mechanics, the Absolute State of all others relative to it can in principle be calculated and hence the material universe completely and basically described.

The practical difficulty is in making a start. Any object occupies Absolute Space, by definition, but whether it is at rest or not in that place is another question. Newton himself believed that Absolute Motion was only detectable if it was an acceleration in Absolute Space, and he offered some (much disputed) reasons for thinking so. The general problem, however, resolves itself into establishing what are the bodies whose motions are absolute /

absolute and in relation to which the motions of other bodies are equivalent to Absolute Motion. "So the question of whether there exists Absolute Space reduces to the question whether there is a frame of reference more basic than any other".¹

If Absolute Space is in other words the most basic frame of reference, then it has the function of a standard and provides a foundation for authority. The justification of a Newtonian's claim that an actual mass is in motion would ultimately be secured by reference to absolute change of place. Once that was established, the Newtonian could claim to be describing not merely appearances but the actual states of things, real motion or real rest, which underlay those appearances. He could, indeed, put those who thought what they saw was true right about their delusions, without risking the retort that he was equally prone to confuse his observations with reality. The end of this process would be complete agreement and vindication of the Newtonian's cosmology.

Newtonian philosophy, then, provides a model for Gerard's search for an absolute standard, one not relative to time or place. Gerard's standard of taste, which is beyond the vicissitudes of history and geography, has a parallel in Newton's Absolute Time and Space. From these metaphysical presuppositions comes the assurance of Newton's theorising. That assurance undoubtedly impressed Gerard, even if he never clearly recognised its origin. In his strivings, however, to define the sure and scientific standard of taste, he projects in the field of criticism a framework of metaphysical absoluteness similar to that which Newton postulates in the physical world.

Absolute Space is the most basic frame of reference in Newtonian physics; the standard of taste is the most basic frame of reference in criticism. Both are attempts to settle the problem of relativity in time and space. Newton in effect banishes relativity from his system by taking his propositions concerning /

¹ Richard Swinburne: Space and Time, London, 1968, p.53.

concerning Absolute Space and Time as axiomatic. No eighteenth-century thinker, except Leibniz and perhaps Berkeley, questioned this move very closely, and indeed Kant later elevated Newton's assumptions about space and time into a priori truths about the universe. This was partly because Absolute Space and Time are concepts clearly enough related to ordinary everyday ideas of place and duration, in a way that, for example, Einstein's ideas of space and time are not.

Gerard's attempt to banish relativity from criticism is related to Newton's in physics, for he tries to do it by appealing to the model of natural philosophy. It might be said that only if there are basic frames of reference in the sciences, such as physics, is Gerard justified in saying that philosophical criticism can establish a most basic frame of reference, the standard of taste, for itself. If, for instance, the concept of Absolute Space and Time had to be abandoned or seriously doubted by physicists, as has been the case at least since Einstein, Gerard's faith in a scientific standard of taste as an escape from the problem of relativism in criticism would be highly questionable. In other words, the empirical certainty Newtonian philosophy seemed to offer, and which Gerard, among others, was anxious to make the basis of his theories, is a much more debatable concept than was thought in the eighteenth century.

There is, however, a much more obvious difference between Absolute Space-Time and the standard of taste, which brings back into focus the fundamental confusion in Gerard and the philosophical critics generally. Absolute Space and Time are quite uniform. The differences between points in them are purely mathematical and imply no sort of qualitative distinction. But the standard of taste, even when it is scientific, is evaluative. Some critical judgments, some works of art are better than others, not just differently oriented. It is as though some positions in space were superior /

superior to the rest, and all motions towards those points were therefore preferable to other motions, so that space and time would have a centre or centres. Such a conception of space and time is as mistaken, from the Newtonian and scientific point of view, as the confusion of the two types of standard or law already discussed. Even if science vindicated Gerard's belief in the possibility of an absolute standard of taste, it would only be a descriptive, not a prescriptive, one, "is", not "ought".¹

¹ See also Appendix III.

CHAPTER VII : CONCLUSION

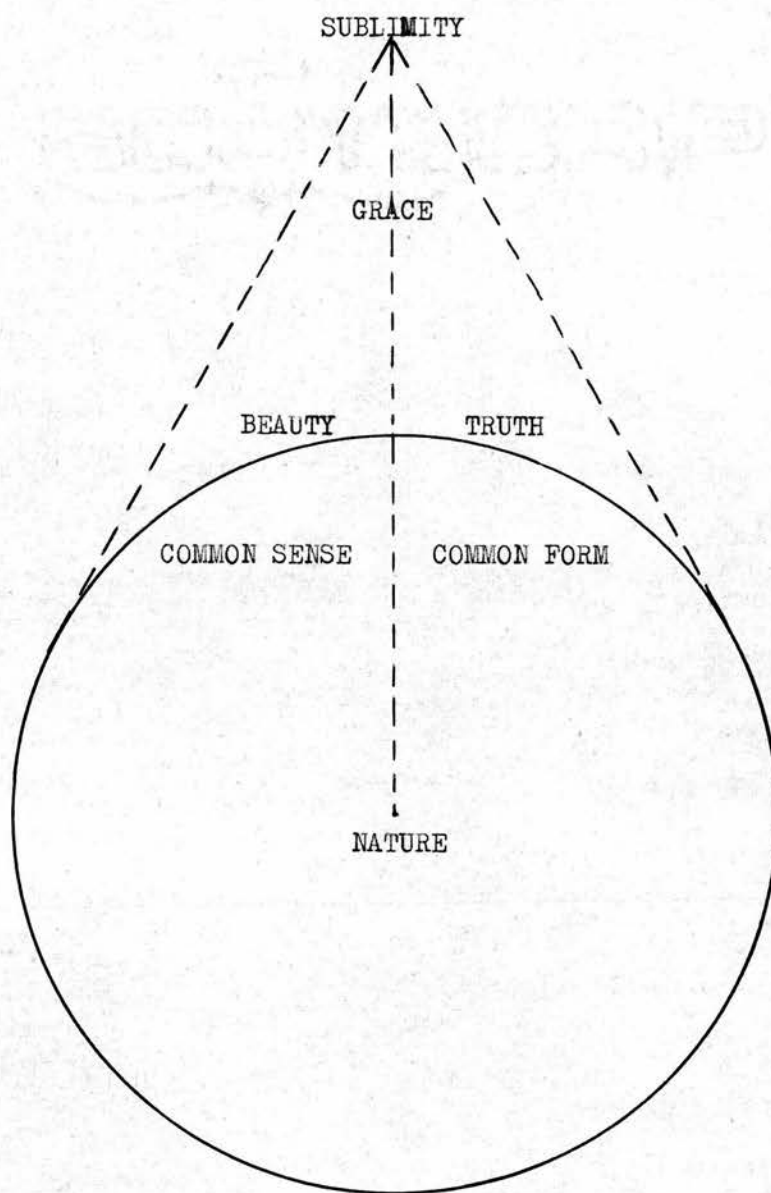
In 1785, Frances Reynolds, sister of Sir Joshua Reynolds the painter, published An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste, and of the Origins of Our Ideas of Beauty, &c.¹ Undoubtedly the most remarkable feature of the work occurs in the first chapter, "A SKETCH of the MENTAL SYSTEM respecting our Perceptions of Taste, &c.":

On meditating on this subject, and marking the progressive stages or degrees of human excellence, the great leading general truths, or mental rests, as I may call them, the common, the beautiful, the graceful, and the sublime, I have been naturally led to form a kind of diagrammatic representation of their respective distances, &c. &c. which I present to my reader on the opposite page, requesting him to refer to it now and then as he goes on, in order to facilitate his comprehension of my meaning. (p.3)

This diagram is reproduced here as it appears on page 2 of the original. Sublimity, grace, beauty and truth, which lie outside the circle of nature, together constitute the "region of intellectual pleasure, genius, or taste" (p. 6). Other details of the diagram present a problem. As it stands, beneath "BEAUTY" and within the circumference of the circle appears "COMMON SENSE", and beneath "TRUTH" appears "COMMON FORM". But on page nine of the work the author states that "common sense seems to be diffusive truth, and common form diffusive beauty", which suggests that "COMMON SENSE" and "COMMON FORM" in the diagram have been interchanged and ought to go beneath "TRUTH" and "BEAUTY" respectively.

The details, however, of this diagram are probably of less interest than its origin. The author claims that she arrived at the idea of such a representation of the principles of taste quite independently, but she also /

¹ Frances Reynolds: An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste, and of the Origins of Our Ideas of Beauty, &c., London 1785; Augustan Reprint Society, No. 27, Los Angeles, 1951.



The diagram in Frances Reynolds's Enquiry Concerning the Principles of taste.

also points out, in her own defence, that it was at least anticipated by reputable thinkers:

... however whimsical and absurd this delineation may appear to my reader, something analogous to the thought may be found in the works of many eminent philosophers, particularly in those of Bacon and of Locke: the latter suggesting that the whole system of morality might be reduced to mathematical demonstration; and the former, in his treatise on the Advancement of Learning, gives a description of the stages of science very much resembling my delineation of the stages of intellectual perfection, or taste. (p.3f).

Frances Reynolds's treatment of taste more geometrico, therefore, qualifies her as a "philosophical critic".

Unfortunately, these fine beginnings do not lead very far. The book is very hard to understand, even with the aid of a diagram, because it is so rhapsodical in parts. One point that emerges is that the sublime is contained in nature, so that the diagram ought to curl back on itself somehow. On the whole one is forced to conclude that Frances Reynolds represents the decadence of philosophical criticism, an essentially sterile belief in the power of association with such philosophical names as Bacon and Locke to justify and dignify quite preposterous speculations about taste.

Perhaps this explains the impatience with criticism displayed by Richard Payne Knight in his Principles of Taste,¹ and his insistence on emotion as opposed to reason in taste:

That, which constitutes the great characteristic difference between liberal and mechanic art; and which gives to the former all its superiority; is feeling or sentiment; a quality, that is always easily perceived, but incapable of being described. (p.241)

If /

¹ Second edition, London, 1805.

If feelings cannot be described, the efforts of the philosophical critics to pin them down are vain. And if "liberal and mechanic" art are fundamentally different then the analogy between criticism and natural philosophy is worthless.

Similar signs of a reaction against philosophical criticism appear in the essays of Vicesimus Knox. In the essay entitled "On philosophical criticism, and on the little assistance it gives to genius" (number lxxxiv), Knox declares that "nature, glowing nature, suggested the exquisitely fine language and ideas as they flowed, and left laborious criticism to weary herself in forming rules and systems from the unstudied efforts of her happier temerity".¹ In an earlier essay, number xxvii, "On the Refinements of Theoretical Criticism"² (which in earlier editions was called "On Modern Criticism"), Knox writes that there is "in all works of true taste and genius, some thing of that elevated nature, which cannot be pointed out by verbal description, which must be perceived by the vibrations it produces on the nervous system, which must be felt as well as understood" (p.147). And then he reveals the most unflattering side of the comparison, implicit in all philosophical criticism, of the critic with the scientific researcher:

I would compare an abstruse philosopher, when he considers the works of genius, to an anatomist, who will not declare a human body perfect and beautiful till he has examined its internal conformation; while the man of taste may be said to resemble a sensible spectator, who at first sight, and without any laborious investigation, pronounces a figure graceful in its symmetry, shape and colour. (p.148)

Knox's remark that the taste for metaphysical criticism is "particularly prevalent among our thoughtful neighbours in North Britain,"³ reminds one of /

¹ Knox, op. cit., p.145.

² Works, London. 1824, volume 1, pp.147f.

³ "On Philosophical Criticism", p.144

of Wordsworth's venomous reflection on Adam Smith, "the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced."¹ Presumably Wordsworth would have included Kames and Gerard in this rebuke.

This is perhaps the point to attempt a general assessment of philosophical criticism, as represented by Addison, Burke, Kames and Gerard. Each of them is a philosophical critic because he turns to natural philosophy, or science, to borrow ideas and methods. This is despite the fact that science was responsible for the breakdown of traditional values in criticism, so that the eighteenth century was faced with urgent problems. The shape of the solutions given to these problems, and indeed of some of the problems themselves, were in turn heavily influenced by scientific thinking.

Thus the philosophical critics link up what may be called the world of science with the world of taste. The two were, however, most unequal. The reason for linking them was the hope that the assurance and success of science could be transferred along with its methods and patterns of thought into matters of taste and criticism. The critics were themselves quite well aware of what they were doing, although not perhaps of the extent to which their thinking was informed and directed by scientific theories. They acknowledged their borrowing of what they thought was the philosophical, or scientific, method, and they knew, for instance, that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities was philosophical. But they were ignorant of how the basically atomistic nature of the psychology of ideas led them straight into difficulties only roughly solved by the theory of association, and their estimation of the value of the empirical approach of science was always faulty.

It is here that the link between science and taste breaks down, for the problem raised is that of authority. The philosophical critics hoped that /

¹ Footnote to Essay, Supplementary to the Preface, 1815.

that they would be able to extend the principles of justification which seemed to apply to scientific theories to their own theories about criticism. But apart from the fact that their understanding of science was relatively crude, they failed to examine the concept of authority closely enough to be aware of the problem they faced. In other words, their concept of criticism was as deficient in this respect as their theory of natural philosophy.

The authority they sought to establish was by and large a static concept. They wanted to pin down the facts, arrive at firm, unquestionable propositions and be able to pronounce unquestionable verdicts. The lasting impression from a deep analysis of philosophical criticism is the sense of insecurity, almost panic, the critics seem to have felt in the face of variations in critical opinions; they were desperate, it seems, to promote lasting agreement and reduce differences to the superficial, the merely verbal. Of course, they were sophisticated enough to allow for such small discrepancies, but ultimately they wished to be able to condemn heterodox views and ensure genuine and fundamental agreement.

They thought they could do so by turning to the facts of criticism. Perhaps their most basic notion, which a contrast with the views of Dryden brings out, is the belief in truth to nature as a guarantee of the stability of knowledge. Empirical investigation and re-investigation of real objects will, they believe, confirm the truth of their ideas. All the philosophical critics share this concept of truth, and therefore they share the related theory of verification by observation. Upon such observations, the "experimental" evidence, they claim to base their deductions of the principles of taste.

Having embraced the philosophical concept of empirical observation, they were almost forced to adopt the philosophical methodology in order to proceed from facts to principles. The actual details of the observations are themselves worthless without systematisation. The critics were bound to /

to need a methodology in order to deal with the mass of detailed evidence upon which they claimed to rely. For if the truth was a matter of relation to observed fact, any generalised principle could only be justified by showing how it was related to confirming instances. A methodology was needed to explain how facts authorised principles; science had such a methodology, and the philosophical critics borrowed it.

Burke and Gerard, therefore, turn aside from the discussion of the responses of human beings to objects to discuss how such information can form the basis for generalisation. They explicitly appeal to scientific procedures and try to explain the derivation of laws of nature. Their main point is that natural laws are not just collections of particulars, not mere averages. They are, however, unable to define the way in which a law of nature both goes beyond the evidence on which it is based and also is protected against too easy rejection in the face of counter-instances.

In another respect Burke emulates the scientific method. Like Addison, he tries to limit the area of his research and avoid metaphysical questions. They both refuse to speculate on the question of the interaction of the physical and the mental. In Addison's case, it is the problem of how ideas, derived from objects, affect the mind; in Burke's, it is the interplay of mind and body. Rejecting these subjects, they turn instead to a descriptive analysis in each case, because from that they see some chance of practical success.

Addison's use of philosophical ways of thinking does not seem to go beyond the description of the pleasures of the imagination. He only recommends the scientific method as a way of establishing the facts about what appeals to taste and does not go into the question of standards. One might argue that it is implicit in Addison's philosophical criticism that the facts about the pleasing qualities of objects and the principles of their appeal to the imagination are not gathered merely for the sake of it, but /

but to form a just standard to which critics can appeal to justify themselves. But Addison does not actually say so.

Kames and Gerard, however, definitely do assert that the principles of taste form a standard. They thus go beyond the limits of scientific authority. It has already been pointed out how what is involved is a confusion about the meanings of "standard" and "law".¹ Having defined the conditions of normality for judgments of taste, Kames and Gerard use that standard as though it presented what ought to be the required judgment in any instance.

Both of them insist that the relationship of the stimulus of external objects to the internal human response or emotion is a causal one. It is true that they dilute the theory by allowing for a certain amount of deviation in response, so that the effects of the same cause are not always identical. Yet their ability to reconcile a causal theory of emotion with a standard of taste probably has a deeper origin. One suspects that their attitude to the causal theory of emotion is anthropomorphic. Just as a man causes something to come about by deciding on a course of action and then implementing it, with all that that implies of willing a result, adjusting behaviour to arrive at the realisation of intentions and, above all, the satisfaction of gaining a successful outcome, so, in the view of Kames and Gerard, the rousing of an emotion by an object is a sort of intentional process which strives to achieve a successful result. Such a notion of causality would enable Kames and Gerard to think of human beings succeeding or failing to respond to stimuli. In a situation where success and failure are real possibilities, prescriptive standards are also possible. One can discriminate between correct and incorrect responses.

Kames and Gerard in effect add the discriminatory powers of taste to the more purely descriptive and analytic principles of pleasure which Addison outlines. /

¹ See above, pp.122ff.

outlines. They are thus able to appeal to the authority of those philosophical principles, their experimental truth, their correspondence with empirical observation, to justify the verdicts critics pass on works of art and on other critics' judgments. The standard of taste seems, in fact, to have a double role. It directs both taste and criticism. One can verify the justness of one's reactions to works of art by comparing them with the principles of taste, and one can verify the justness of a critical judgment, by checking with the standard of taste that the reactions the critic says are just in the case of a given work of art of this particular type are in fact prescribed by the standard.

Burke also extends scientific authority beyond its limits, but in a different way from Kames and Gerard. It might indeed seem that, like Addison, he does not extend it at all, but is content with a description of the origin of our ideas. The standard of taste does not seem to be a part of his purpose. Yet the result of his analysis of the sublime and the beautiful comes very close to what Gerard and Kames contrive as the standard of taste, and Burke's theories do have the property of defining what emotional responses are proper to certain types of stimuli.

Burke achieves this result, as has been explained, by calling on biological necessities, self-preservation and propagation of the species, which are in effect disguises for value judgments. The values in question are essentially human, and so Burke's theories are more intimately anthropomorphic than those of Kames and Gerard could be. Objects, according to Burke, actually have qualities whose purpose is to stimulate the faculties human beings have to ensure the survival of the species.

But Burke's use of the concept of survival does not only introduce the prescriptive or mandatory element to his account of human reactions, similar to that with which Kames and Gerard invest the standard of taste; because the survival of which he speaks is that of the species rather than of the individual, he also introduces the other feature of the standard of taste as Kames and Gerard see it, that is, its status as the norm of human behaviour. The standard of Kames and Gerard is the justification for condemning vitiated taste /

taste and narrow-minded criticism; in Burke, however, the normality of human survival-mechanisms has a far more drastic authority, involving no less than the life or death of human beings. Failure to respond to the sublime and beautiful is not just bad taste, but a sign of incapacity to promote the survival of the human race. Such a failure of the biological mechanisms of survival in an individual is a condemnation because, according to Burke, it is not normal to show such personal indifference to the maintenance of the species. Because of the value of the continued existence of humanity, the person who does not react appropriately to the sublime and the beautiful is to be condemned, if not by men, then possibly by nature, which will select for extinction those individuals unable to respond to their survival instincts.

It is perhaps legitimate to project Burke's interest in instinctual responses and biological mechanisms into his expressionist theory of language. For what is involved here is again the directness and naturalness of responses. The speaker's emotions are communicated to the hearers by the power of sympathy. In Kames there seems to be room for reasoned judgments concerning what emotion is expressed and what expressions are appropriate to which emotions. But Burke's expressionism has less room for criticism, because it is a theory of communication. For Kames, it is a difficult scientific research to discover the delicate relations between ideas which constitute emotions; but for Burke it is an everyday occurrence that hearers respond to speakers emotionally by sympathy, almost automatically intuiting what emotion is being expressed.

Besides the question of expressionistic authority, therefore, there is another important feature of Burke's language theory. The concept of sympathetic communication suggests a picture of society in which individuals are continually washed by waves of emotion. A person expresses himself; his /

his hearers sympathetically experience his meaning, and in turn express themselves; and more and more people, more and more distant from the source, come to know the common feeling. Thus the whole of humanity is linked by ties of common feeling.

Burke's idea of sympathetic communications, evidently, is a social parallel to the association of ideas in the psychology of the individual. Burke is perhaps more successful than Addison, Kames and Gerard in disguising the way in which he is beset by the problems of atomistic ways of thought. He does, of course, enjoy the advantage of seeming to deny the psychology of ideas and the theory of association themselves. Yet his theory of communication by sympathy suggests that he too felt constrained to account for the way in which human individuals organised themselves into communities.

The problem of how a group of individuals become a community is only one manifestation of a recurrent difficulty which the philosophical critics face again and again. It is the question of how separate atoms can be combined into coherent wholes. It is evident in the psychology of ideas and the problem of how separate ideas are organised into trains of thought. It reappears in a different form when the critics consider the standard of taste, for then they have to explain how it is possible to have strong convictions soundly based on genuine experience and yet take other people's views into account. It also appears as the contrast between the worth of the individual, especially the fine critic or artist, and his statistical commonplaceness. Kames in particular is acutely aware that the critical opinions he favours are not necessarily those of the majority, and Gerard too recognises how restricted is the European taste which he admires.

In Dryden, most of these problems are not really present, because he is fundamentally untouched by the metaphysical disturbance of science. He still believes in the possibility of knowing a kind of truth which is not dependent on experience of nature, although it may be corroborated by such experience. /

experience. He need not therefore call on empirical evidence to authorise his critical judgment. He is not face to face with the problems posed by scientific notions of authority. It may be that his response to the challenge science represented to traditional forms of authority was to retreat into the kind of scepticism which allowed him to avoid facing the questions raised by the scientific revolution, a scepticism which meant a refusal to assert traditional authority in case it was therefore laid open to scientific doubt, while at the same time he refused to accept fully the authority of empirical science.

With Addison, however, that kind of authority seems to be the only true one. But he contrasts art and science, fiction and fact, without seeming to choose definitely one or other. It is as though they both could hold his allegiance and that upstart science had not finally made fiction altogether suspect. The usual explanation of this ambivalence is that Addison, already in the early eighteenth century, takes the romantic road and calls on the imagination and fancy to redeem a world chilled by science. But in fact Addison demonstrates quite clearly the unacceptability of poetic fiction when judged by the empirical authority of Locke and Newton. Addison is nostalgic for poetry rather than prophetic, and is surely more important for advocating that empirical investigation of taste that Burke and Kames undertake and Gerard tries to justify as the standard of taste.

The central problem in Kames's Elements is atomism. He relentlessly exposes the paradoxical dilemma of the individual and the group. His empiricism and psychology of ideas drive on to the point where the cohesion of society is a mystery and the standard of taste a seeming impossibility. He escapes from the difficulties he besets himself with by insisting on the uniformity of human nature. This enables him to leap all barriers separating men. The justification of criticism he gives is therefore general, not particular /

particular or individual. Kames succeeds in avoiding the problem set by the impersonality of scientific authority by depersonalising taste. He sweeps aside the difficulty of the atomic individualism of human beings and their tastes by asserting that the differences there are among them are negligible. Human experiences are not just equivalent but essentially the same. Hence it is immaterial who has the experience of a work of art; anyone can have it, according to Kames.

Gerard, however, is a far less single-minded thinker than Kames, for all the similarities between their theories of taste. A belief in the uniformity of human nature is too simple a solution for him. He shows a greater sensitivity to the duality of taste, the fact that it involves both sensations and judgments. The more he examines the two aspects of taste, the less able he is to reconcile them. In particular, the emotional responses to works of art as experienced by the senses seem incompatible with the concepts of critical judgment and a standard of taste. The further Gerard penetrates into the nature of emotions, the less it seems likely that they can be directly influenced by judgment. And yet a standard of taste is impossible unless criticism can be based on reasoned authority.

Perhaps more than any of the other critics Gerard appeals to natural philosophy and its methods to solve the problem of taste as he sees it. Science's combination of empiricism and authority would seem to be the very model for explaining the standard of taste as a combination of sensation and judgment. The "philosophical method" means the derivation from experimental evidence of general principles, laws of nature, which remain sensitive to empirical observation, yet clearly direct future enquiries and serve to correct any new results.

Gerard, however, seems unaware of a new duality implicit in the concepts of law and standard as he uses them. This duality parallels the former /

former, between sensation and judgment, and takes it to a deeper level in the contrast between descriptive and prescriptive laws, "is" and "ought". The problem can most clearly be seen in the case of Gerard's Essay, but it is present to some degree in all the philosophical critics, except possibly Addison, in so far as they wish to use descriptive, empirical accounts of human nature and taste as the reasons for regulating that taste and arriving at standards.

That Gerard was mistaken about scientific authority is pardonable considering how confused the subject was even to scientists in his day. At the very roots of natural philosophy lay some metaphysical propositions of staggering import made by Newton and left undisturbed for centuries. These propositions, regarding Absolute Time and Space, were Newton's way of solving the problem of relativity in his physics and universalising his mechanics. They are the justification of his transference of his mathematical models to actual events.

In Newtonian physics there is in fact a certain degree of relativity. For certain simple motions all material frames of reference are equivalent. For instance, the measurement of the velocity of an object with respect to one set of objects will be mathematically equivalent to the measure of the same object's velocity with respect to another set of objects moving at a constant speed in a fixed direction relative to the first set. Given the necessary information, it is a straightforward calculation to convert one value of the object's velocity into the other, expressing each as relative to one or other set of objects, here acting as frames of reference.

It was theoretically possible, therefore, that, for instance, relative to certain frames of reference, the motion of an object could be expressed as many different numerical values, including zero. A natural question was whether one of these values might be more basic than the others as a description of the movement of the object. Newton believed that one value was /

was always more basic; it represented the real or Absolute Motion of the body. Motion was not therefore completely relative. Any expression of the velocity of a body relative to a given frame of reference could in principle be compared by mathematical conversions with the value of the Absolute Motion of the body; this would be a crude measurement of how true the relative expression was.

Absolute Space is an extension of common-sense ideas about the relative situations of objects. It converts into mathematical expression ordinary ideas about places being above or below one another, or to left or right. Such notions of place are dependent on the points of view of observers. What is up for a European is down for an Australian, roughly speaking. The equivalence of frames of reference in Newtonian physics, however, makes it possible to convert European upward motions into Australian downward motions, and vice versa. And the theory of Absolute Space makes it possible, in principle, to say which is the true direction, up or down.

Within the context of the theory of Absolute Space and Time, then, it is possible to give completely certain descriptions of objects' positions and movements, in which terms like "above", "below", "faster" and so on have quite definite meanings, translateable into mathematical values. Observers in various places, instead of arguing about how what they saw relative to their own view-points differed from what the rest saw, could all convert their measurements to the one common, Absolute standard and then make a genuine comparison. In so doing, they would produce the ultimate, the most basic description of events.

What the philosophical critics wanted was the same sort of most basic description of objects of taste and criticism. Once they had plotted such standard accounts, the deviations of actual critical judgments could be noted and explained as relative to the peculiar situation of the critic in time and place, history and geography. The philosophical critics therefore express /

express the eighteenth-century belief that relativity does not have universal significance, that there are basic frames of reference, absolute standards, and that therefore final, definite descriptions of things as they are and fixed agreements about them are possible. It seems unlikely that they would have had such faith in a stable framework of the universe had Newton not made it fundamental to his physics.

Absolute descriptions, whether in physics or in taste, cannot be made, or play the part of standards, if every observer insists on his personal point of view, that is to say, that the meanings he gives his terms are the only right ones. Physicists and critics have both to be willing to pool their resources, exchange observations and collate their data, regardless of personal considerations. Thus, at the same time as they were insisting on the prime value of emotional responses, the philosophical critics had also to assert an impersonal, scientific attitude to such data. In other words, they had to admit, in order to discount, the relativity of the positions of individual critics. There was no assurance, except perhaps for Lord Kanes, that any one critic's viewpoint enabled him to gain a direct insight into the principles of taste, so that his experiences coincided with the standard of taste. It was much more likely that any individual's experiences were at least slightly idiosyncratic, relative to the standard.

This complex attitude is apparent in Addison. He sees that what the understanding thinks of as true about the world is different from the actual experiences of men. Compared with the imagination, the understanding is less intimately associated with those experiences. Yet, because of the "philosophical" distinction between primary and secondary qualities, he thinks the understanding is better able to know what the sources of experience are really like. He therefore chooses impersonal scientific fact as the truth, and appeals to empirical research as a way of authorising critical /

critical descriptions. The personal experience of individuals, enriched by the pleasures of the imagination, are not as reliable as the sober investigations of the scientific understanding, even in matters of taste.

Burke follows on from Addison, but in effect tries to square the circle by re-introducing the human element into impersonal scientific thinking, at a level somewhat above the personal, it is true. Instead of keeping the personal prejudices of critics out of the description of taste, Burke generalises them into conditioning biological impulses which he tries to show are firmly built in to the operations of taste. He refuses to relativise the position, not just of the individual, but of man in general and treats the value of humanity as though it too were an absolute. He seems to be offering an impersonal, scientific account, but this is an illusion caused by his substitution for the individual human being of a generalised abstract, the human species. He treats the species as though it were not made up of individuals all with separate points of view, and is content with the vague suggestion that the species has its own point of view which transcends the relativistic limitations of its members. But it is obvious that the value of humanity is not therefore an absolute, but relative to the species; human beings may value themselves, but cats, monkeys and dinosaurs may not.

Lord Kames by-passes the problem of the relativity of individual views by fusing them into general views not limited by individual differences. Impersonal scientific standards are not, for him, difficult to achieve, because he neutralises the significance of individuality by his thesis of the uniformity of human nature. Every observer's personal point of view more or less coincides with the absolute description.

Hume, however, by insisting on the argument that there is no disputing about tastes, faced Gerard with rampant relativism. Under this pressure Gerard /

Gerard resorted to natural philosophy as Newton had left it, with an authoritarian background ultimately based on the theory of Absolute Space and Time. More clearly than any of the other critics, Gerard shows the paradoxical nature of taste, its division into sensation and judgment, private and public, relative and absolute, and he also shows how the philosophical critics would use the methodology of science to link the two sides in each case.

It is obvious, however, that the philosophical critics were in general using scientific methodology for a definite purpose. They saw themselves as faced with the problem of taste and criticism, the problem of authority and judgment among such variety of opinion, and they adopted a scientific attitude as a means to solving that problem. Would they have adopted scientific methods if natural philosophy had not achieved the particular stability and success Newton's classical formulations had given it? Surely not. In the final analysis, the philosophical critics must be regarded as incurious about the methods they borrowed, because they were already committed to finding an authoritative, stable standard of taste. A method of research which led to a different kind of conclusion would have lacked interest for them. But luckily the methods of natural philosophy did not seem to lead in any other direction but the one they wished to go. One way of regarding their work is to see it as a determined attempt to reconcile the paradoxical difference between private and public taste. But another way is to see it as an effort to justify an age-old conclusion in an apparently new way.

From the twentieth-century point of view, then, the philosophical critics must be accused of missing the significance of natural philosophy for criticism. The value of that example is not the way in which science can (if it can) produce conclusive demonstrations, accurate descriptions and a /

a truthful picture of the world, but the fact that it does so by testing and re-testing, collecting opinions and revising them, changing theories, checking them with experiments and fresh observations, innovating and, above all, discussing and debating. The conduct of that debate, and the way in which scientific theories are criticised, are of more importance for literary critics and theorists about art than any success that natural philosophy may have in arriving at the truth about nature.

Despite the fact that the final judgment on them is not a very favourable one, the present writer must confess his admiration for the writers he has discussed. It requires to be stressed how enterprising these men were, and how industrious. The urge to literary expressions is widespread, but its fulfilment involves too much perseverance for most men. It is easy to criticise a finished work, and it is right to do so, but the critic ought always to acknowledge his indebtedness to the author for communicating the stimulation of his thoughts. And remembering the amateur status of such authors as Burke, Kames and Gerard, at least in criticism, one is struck by their energy and enthusiasm. Not that these men were fools; they were sensible of their intellectual worth, though not inclined, perhaps, to claim exceptional genius. But their common conviction that an intelligent man's remarks on a subject like taste are worth setting down is just and admirable. Whatever the result of their speculations, their alertness of mind, their inquisitiveness and their desire to state opinions for the benefit of others are wholly laudable and represent a real contribution to literature.

APPENDIX I.

"As in Mathematics, so in Natural Philosophy, the Investigation of difficult Things by the Method of Analysis, ought ever to precede the Method of Composition. This Analysis consists in making Experiments and Observations, and in drawing general Conclusions from them by Induction, and admitting of no Objections against the Conclusions, but such as are taken from Experiments, or other certain Truths. For Hypotheses are not to be regarded in experimental Philosophy. And although the arguing from Experiments and Observations by Induction be no Demonstration of general Conclusions; yet it is the best way of arguing which the Nature of Things admits of, and may be looked upon as so much the stronger, by how much the Induction is more general. And if no Exception occur from Phenomena, the Conclusion may be pronounced generally. But if at any time afterwards any Exception shall occur from Experiments, it may then begin to be pronounced with such Exceptions as occur. By this way of Analysis we may proceed from Compounds to Ingredients, and from Motions to the Forces producing them; and in general, from Effects to their Causes, and from particular Causes to more general ones, till the Argument end in the most general. This is the Method of Analysis: And the synthesis consists in assuming the Causes discover'd, and establish'd as Principles, and by them explaining the Phaenomena proceeding from them, and proving the Explanations".

(Penultimate paragraph of Book III of Newton's Opticks, 1716, ed. I. Bernard Cohen, New York, 1952. See above, page 50).

APPENDIX II.

It is regrettable that David Hume never produced the full study of criticism which he seems to promise in the introduction to his Treatise of Human Nature. His handful of essays on taste and various passing references to the subject have been collected together by Mossner¹ in an attempt to fill the gap, but the result is inevitably disappointing. Hume's extant criticism consists of stimulating insights of a tantalising brevity and does not do justice to his capacities.

Hume's remarks on the study of criticism in the introduction to the Treatise, however, suggest that it would in any case have been difficult to treat him simply as a critic. In an extended metaphor, he compares logic, morals, criticism and politics to the outer defences of a country, which he proposes to by-pass and, "instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march up directly to the capital or center of these sciences, to human nature itself" (p.xx). Hence a study of Hume the critic could only be included in a study of Hume the philosopher of human nature, something beyond the scope of the present work.

Furthermore, although the title page of the Treatise announces Hume's intention of introducing "the experimental Method of Reasoning into MORAL SUBJECTS", his relationship with scientific thinking and Newtonianism is neither simple nor straightforward. His discussions of causality, the problem of "is" and "ought" and the evidence for miracles raise problems in the philosophy of science which are also beyond the scope of this work. Neither Addison, Burke, Kames nor Gerard make such positive contributions to the debate about the theory of the natural philosophy which influenced their criticism.

¹ Ernest C. Mossner: "Hume's 'Of Criticism'," in Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660-1800: Essays in Honor of Samuel Holt Monk, ed. Howard Anderson and John S. Shea, Minneapolis, 1967, pp.232-248.

APPENDIX III.

In 1776 Gerard published his Dissertation On Subjects relating to The Genius and the Evidences of Christianity. It is ironic in the light of what has been said above concerning Absolute Space and Time to find in the fourth section of the second Dissertation the following passage:

In numberless ways, false opinions may gain ground; and when they have been once adopted, they may be for ages transmitted from some to others, without being at all suspected or examined: but an opinion's subsisting ever so long while it is not examined, affords no sort of presumption of its truth. The Ptolemaic system of the world was long the received hypothesis: but its reception was no proof of its truth. During all that time, it was taken for granted without examination: most men wanted the means of bringing it to a proper trial; if a few had them, and used them, they disbelieved it; and as soon as it was generally examined, it was generally exploded. It did not require repeated examinations to confute it; it fell at once, upon the first scrutiny of unprejudiced reason. Many false hypotheses have reigned in every science, through long periods of time. Attend to such of them as are now abandoned; you will find that they were established on false principles which, during their reign, were never called in question. Their prevalence, therefore, truly proceeded from men's having never examined these principles: as soon as these were examined, it appeared that they had been all along taken for granted without evidence; that, therefore, however well the several parts of the superstructure hung together, the whole hypothesis was nevertheless a mere baseless fabric. (pp.451f.)

That Gerard's acceptance of Newtonian cosmology was complacent is confirmed at the end of Part III, section iv, of the Essay on Taste:

The /

The Newtonian theory is not more satisfying to the understanding, by the just reasonings on which it is founded, than agreeable to taste, by its simplicity and elegance...When the mundane system is truly explained, it appears to be adjusted with the nicest regularity and proportion; the sense of which at once confirms the theory, and fills us with admiration of the supreme wisdom. (pp.179f.)

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